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Our spending habits in Ramadan go haywire!

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street peddler outside the Al Hussein Mosque was indifferent. "It's not our fault, we buy at high prices and have to sell at high prices."

What is also astonishing about Ramadan is the long queues in front of bakeries. "You have to wait for about half an hour to buy a kilo of *lataif*," says another customer. He has to endure the wait because *lataif* is a tradition, "which my kids love."

Naturally, the price of confectioneries have also skyrocketed, but few people feel the pinch. A number of housewives in the downtown area say that "they are only complimentary, if the price of sweets are too high, then we don't buy, as we can make cakes at home."

But, frankly speaking, we, as consumers, must take a share of the blame. A distant comment could be heard from the crowds. "It is the people, who are creating this in the market," says one man in downtown. "Why are they having this much, I'll never know. They don't need to buy that much, he adds pointing to the shoppers."

"What they seem not to realize is that they don't need that much, and most of the food will go to waste, something that goes against the very concept of Ramadan," he points out.

But it is the trend during Ramadan. For some reason, people do over-purchase, particularly non-essential items.

At the beginning of the month, it is agreed that people's demand is usually for food items, but as Ramadan reaches its end new complaints arise: buying wear for Eid Al Fitr.

Also demands switches to another issue: During the celebrations the new demand is for confectioneries. Three or four days before Eid, vendors huddle around shops and groceries sprawling their goods.



Despite well-stocked shops, prices are shooting up

Referring to the hikes in Ramadan, many consumers put the blame on the price fluctuation of the government.

Though they could be right, the issue lies in the hands of people. It is consumers who create such price chaos, and enlarge the gap between their income and the sharp price increase. The solution for this price instability is to rationalize consumption and minimize the popular complaints.

This is added to merchant's desires to get as much profit as possible, Dr. Obaidat says.

According to him, the fluctuation of prices have not deterred consumers' willingness to buy or store food.

Rather, such policy has magnified the merchants' ambitions to achieve as much profit as possible.

A field study conducted by the CPS on prices of various commodities during the first days of Ramadan showed that prices of about 39 kinds of food out of 55 went up, representing nearly 71 percent of overall consumer goods. However, prices of 15 goods were stable and maintained their former level while the price of only one (*lataif*) has fallen. The highest rise was in the price of tomatoes, shooting up by as much as a 100 percent.



Mayor defends controversial road project that threatens hundreds with eviction

Continued from page 1

Abadi said "first we have the people who bought the land legally and registered it officially, those can go to court, if they are not satisfied with the compensation we offer them. But as far as I know, no one complained. And second we have the people who built their houses or tin shacks on the land illegally. In spite of this fact, we gave them a fair compensation for humanitarian reasons."

In spite of the advantages mentioned by Dr. Abadi some people, whose lives have been affected by the project, expressed their fear and suspicion.

"The street is a cover-up for the original project which is to settle Palestinian refugees as required by the peace agreement," one former deputy, who requested anonymity, told *The Star*.

The talk about settling Palestinians was condemned by Dr. Abadi and also by Hamadeh Faraneh, the deputy of the Amman's 1st District. "Settling refugees is the usual excuse some people use to prevent improving the infrastructure of Palestinian communities," Faraneh said. He stressed that improving the living conditions of Palestinian

refugees doesn't mean giving up their right of return to their homeland.

"At least 300 houses have been removed and thousands are in their way to being pulled down, all we ask for is a just financial compensation for the residents and providing them with a land to build new houses," Faraneh said. But Dr. Abadi is convinced that the financial compensation is just.

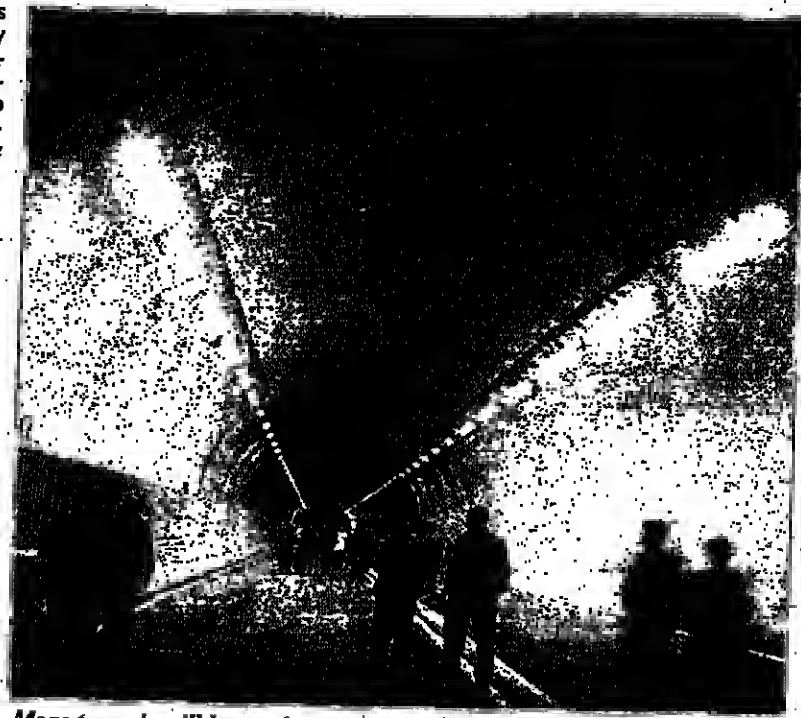
Faraneh said that Al Urdun Street project will remove houses very close to Al Hussein Camp. He said the victims of the eviction orders are poor people whose living conditions are miserable. Once evicted, those people, most of whom came to Jordan as a result of 1948 and 1967 crises

in Palestine, will have no place to go to.

A state of resentment dominates the people who left their houses for little money and are now without shelter.

The Palestinian Affairs Dept. at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told *The Star* that it was not officially informed of anything related in the future of Al Hussein Camp.

"The pulling down will not affect Al Hussein camp since the land is leased by UNRWA. But the street will only remove the trespasses and expansions done by some inhabitants," said Tahseen Barqawi from the department. "So instead of 60 metres width, the street will be only 40 metres wide near the camp."



More tunnels will be on the way to ease Amman's traffic congestion

Deputies divided about military exercises

Continued from page 1

Arah Gulf which Jordan never intervened on, he ended by saying "To criticize this country for its participation is something that is acceptable."

About 18 deputies spoke about the event in the House's session, whilst 10 strongly criticized the participation, considering it as a grave departure from Jordan's Arab identity, and expressed fear that these games will create a future unbalanced military alliance between Jordan on one hand and Turkey/Israel on the other. They also stressed that Israel is still occupying

Arab lands, while Turkey on other hand escalates its aggression on the north of Iraq. Deputies stressed that Jordan should be working on strengthening its alliances with Arab countries.

"We were happy to hear strong criticism of our government against Israeli policies, but Jordanian participation in these games have let us down," leftist deputy Bassam Haddadin said. "These manoeuvres are sending political signals to some Arab countries; our interests are different from those of Israel and Turkey."

Six deputies supported

participation. Most of them have a military background and found participation useful for gathering intelligence about the military potential of the participating countries.

Deputies pointed out to the last Gulf War when Syria and Egypt—states who are now criticizing Jordan—participated in the international alliance against Iraq.

"The intelligence side of the participation serves to improve our military information on the potentials of the three navies. Such information could also serve other Arab countries," said deputy Ahmad Oweidi Al Abadi, a former police officer.

However, few deputies expressed reservations, but at the same criticized those Arab countries who approached Jordan. Referring to Iraq, Abdel Ra'ouf Al Rawabdeh, a leading member of the National Constitutional Party said "Those who attacked an Arab country and destroyed its future for the coming 50 years, have no right to criticize a token participation."

Iraqi diplomat escapes attack in Amman



Al Taher in his office after the attack

POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

are still continuing to find the assailants behind the attack of an Iraqi diplomat last Saturday. The Commercial Attaché in the Iraqi Embassy in Amman, Rahim Al Taher, escaped unharmed after unknown attackers fired at his car. A gunman fired a shot using a silenced pistol as Mr Al Taher was

making his way to his office at 7:45 in the morning. Acting Minister of State for Information Affairs Dr. Nasser Al Lawzi said earlier that investigations are still continuing but that the government is not treating this matter as a security issue. Forty-five year-old Mr Taher is a senior Iraqi diplomat in Jordan.

Netanyahu emerges weak but victorious after budget test

Continued from page 1

would have trouble functioning with such a narrow majority. "I believe that it will be difficult for the coalition to survive," he said. Other commentators, though, pointed to Netanyahu's history of political survival in 19 months in office and said his government could stay afloat for some time to come. "You can lose a lot of money betting against Bibi," a US diplomat said, referring to the prime minister by his popular nickname and asserting he would manage to serve out his four-year term.

Mark Heller, political scientist at Tel Aviv University, said he expected Netanyahu to try to hold his coalition together on the issue of an Israeli troop redeployment by casting it in terms that make it impossible for the Palestinians to accept or for the coalition opponents to reject.

"He will impose some very tough conditions that will at least buy him some time," Heller said. "Then, if early elections are held, it puts him in the best possible position for his constituents, showing that he's not opposed to the peace process but is also standing up for Israeli security."

Meanwhile, the opposition Labor Party has said it will seek a no-confidence vote



against the government next week: 61 votes in favor of such a move could bring down the government and force elections for prime minister and parliament within 60 days. With 80 votes, legislators

could retain their seats and force the prime minister alone to stand for election.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

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JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar

Naming names in the press

Jordan's Press Association is making another stand in these seemingly troubled times. In a press statement released this week it stated categorically that it rejects any visits by JPA journalists to Israel. Association officials are saying that it regards such visits as a form of normalization with Israel, something which the Association rejects. The statement points out that while the JPA understands journalistic ethics and coverage, nevertheless it sees the latest press delegations visits to Israel as an encroachment on its own standings as an organization. The statement urges such people, especially those from official media organizations who visit Israel not to use the term of "press delegation" but to use a "media delegation". This statement points out that this is essential so as not to create a misunderstanding about the JPA which rejects normalization.

Jordanian workers in Israel

There are more than 10,000 Jordanians working in Israel illegally. The government in Jordan appears to be unable to do anything about this issue despite repeated warnings from the Ministry of Labor about the potential dangers of Jordanians working in Israel illegally. So far, it is suggested that the Israeli authorities are turning a blind eye to these workers who take on poorly paid manual jobs. However, one Jordanian was shot in the leg as he tried to run away from an Israeli patrol. At the time, he was on a bus carrying Palestinian workers coming from Israel to Qalqilya. An army checkpoint the bus was stopped by Israeli soldiers, the Jordanian tried to run away, because he carried no work permit and was consequently shot in the leg, another Palestinian worker was also wounded.

Back in the news

Former deputy Tojan Faisal, who lost her seat in the last November elections has filed a legal suit at the High Court against Interior Minister Nahir Rashid and members of the electoral committee. She is contesting the outcome of the elections in Amman's 3rd District, which she was a parliamentary member of in the last legislature. Newly elected Lower House deputy, Naif Mullah won Ms. Faisal's seat. She has since accused the electoral committee of allowing members of the armed forces to vote, something which they are not allowed to do so under the law.

Hot on the trail

The Surveillance and Inspection Bureau has been very busy in 1997, seeking to keep bureaucracy and red tape in check while at the same time making sure that government directives are obeyed. About 348 committees were formed precisely for this purpose. In Amman, the Bureau formed 30 committees in 1997. In Irbid, 14. The Inspection Bureau has also issued 11102 administrative regulations that were put in force by public corporations and government departments. Also, the Bureau received 586 complaints against administrative directives; 162 of these complaints are awaiting solution.

Weeklies await decision

The High Court has postponed its decision on the issue of the newspaper weeklies till 26 January. The eight weeklies are contesting the validity of the Press and Publication Law and hope that the court would rule in their favor and hence allow them to resume publication.

Expulsions

The visit of the two Lower House deputies to Israel continues to raise popular reaction. Both the executive of the Protection of the Homeland and Confronting Normalization Committee and the Higher Coordinating Committee of the opposition parties have sent a strongly worded message to the Speaker of the Lower House Saed Hayel Al Sour. The message demands that the House discusses again the visit of deputies Mohammad Rifaat and Hamadeh Farach to the Knesset last month. Furthermore the opposition parties call on the Lower House to expel the deputies for their action. The statement said that this was a demand already made by thousands of people. In addition to the anti-normalization committee, the parties who signed the statement include the Popular Unity Party, Baath Arab Progressive Party, Baath Arab Socialist Party, Islamic Action Front, Arab Land Party, the Arab Jordanian Constitutional Front, Popular Democratic Party, National Democratic Movement and Al Ansar.

Rumble in the party

It seems that the Jordanian Communist Party (JCP) could now face a two-way split, something that existed before 1985. The election of a new boss to lead the party into the next millennium is creating anguish among the rank and file. According to Al Majd, former General Secretary Yacoub Zayadeen is suspending all of his activities and staying at home. He is protesting the election of Dr Munir Hamarnah to the post of party chief. It is suggested that up till the first minute, Zayadeen expected to be re-elected, but was surprised when he learnt that he had another contender who was actually the his favorite. Zayadeen led the Communists since 1985.



Zayadeen

AMMAN (Star)—Latest poll conducted jointly by the Center of Strategic Studies (CSS) at the University of Jordan and the Nablus-based Center for Palestine Research and Studies (CPRS) show that over 80 percent of Jordanians still believe that Israel is still the enemy.

The poll divided the sample into three categories: National sample, opinion leaders sample and residents of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. While 62.6 percent of the national sample supported unity between Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza, only 36.9 percent of the opinion leaders sample supported this sort of merger. This compares to 69.8 percent among residents of refugee camps. Support was much less, however, for confederation or federation in all three categories.

In sharp contrast, the majority of Palestinians polled in the West Bank and Gaza, were not in favor of either unity or federation. The highest support for confederation was only 37.9 percent.



His Majesty King Hussein holds an Iftar banquet at the Al Hussein Sports City, Sunday. In the presence of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the banquet was attended by other Royal Princes, and members of the governmental and popular sectors. With Prime Minister Abdel Salam Al Majali, and members of the Senate and Lower House, the Iftar was attended by officials, media personalities, businessmen, and heads of political parties and professional associations. Royal Court Chief Awn Al Khasawneh was also present.

Environment and weather changes could usher in a new era, says expert

By Ibtisam Awadat
Special to The Star

FLOODS, TORNADOS and earthquakes in Italy, Germany and other countries, while great fires burn everything in their way in Indonesia and Malaysia.

According to a German weekly, the rate of natural disasters in the '90s, increased four times since the '60s. So what's going on?

"Causes for the climatic change and changes in global temperature are twofold," says Dr Ali Abandah, former director-general of the Meteorological Dept.

"First we have cooling which takes place when nebula clouds, gases or volcanic ashes cover the sun and prevent solar radiation from getting through and reaching the earth. This happened a million years ago that led us to the Ice Age," he adds.

"Recently in 1991 and because of the Gulf War and the consequent burning of the oil wells resulted in a cloud of smoke which contained soot and SO₂, absorbed the solar radiation and caused the cooling—the cloud was the reason for the decreasing in temperature in the Gulf region."

The eastern winds in the upper air layers of the atmosphere during Summer pushed it to Jordan where we faced the severest winter season for more than 70 years."

The result was heavy snow fall on five occasions, no one could leave his house. Also there was a sharp drop in temperature that reached four degrees below normal; bearing in mind that 3 to 4 degrees difference in temperature leads to a complete climatic change."

Dr Abandah, an expert in weather and climatic change who had finished writing a book on Astronomy and Meteorology in Arab literature, explains the second impact.

"From the beginning of this century, greenhouse effect gases—especially Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)—increased in the atmosphere. This is because of industrialization and the burning of fossil fuels."

Around the middle of this century the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere increased to 320 parts per million in the air and now it is 340 parts per million. Something that caused global warming.

According to Dr Abandah, if the ratio of CO₂ doubles in the future, it would mean an increase of 3 to 4 degrees in temperatures, something which would cause the ice to melt in the Polar regions and increase sea levels up to 1.20 meters.

"If this happens, most of the coasts and islands would be submerged. 15% of Bangladesh and 15% of the coasts of Egypt will disappear; this includes more than a thousand islands in the Pacific and other regions," Dr Abandah explains.

This is why the countries, represented by the UN, organize international conferences

every now and then, to limit the effects of the greenhouse gases—One noticeable conference which took place in Brazil in 1992, where 156 countries signed a "Climate Change Control Agreement."

"The impact of the increasing sea levels may not affect Jordan or the coasts of countries along the Red Sea or the Arabian Gulf countries because these coasts are higher than the sea level compared with northern coasts, in Egypt or Bangladesh," Dr Abandah maintains.

"However, if the sea level increases by a meter in Amman, then that means 20 meters from the coast will be submerged, but this is nothing compared to the drowned kilometers in other spots," Dr Abandah adds.

Experts are alarmed by the level of CO₂ in the atmosphere. They point out that today, it reaches 6 billion tons annually.

"We have to use alternative energy instead of these that result from burning, we could use the direct solar radiation or wind power, waves, especially from the ebb and flows of the sea and we can also improve the quality of transport." The expert pointed out that filters for gases, and preventing deforestation are



Abandah

also other important ways to reverse the 'green-house' effect.

"In the last decades we had extreme cases of changes in weather because of the interruption in the 'general circulation of the atmosphere'."

Dr Abandah explains that the "fluctuations in the climate means you have dryness in one place and floods in another."

In Jordan, the Meteorological Department was established in 1955, but there are documents and records for meteorological readings since 1922, when the British Air Force station in Amman at that period used them to know the weather conditions every hour to guide their pilots.

Jordan's observer role in maneuvers encounters stiff opposition, locally and regionally

Continued from page 1

from the games. Representatives of four opposition parties, Islamists and leftists described Jordan's participation as a final exit from national and Arab determinants and forms a real danger to the security of the nation.

The 12-party opposition is holding a popular conference today, Thursday to discuss the Jordan's participation.

Turkey and Israel insist that the purpose of the naval exercises is joint training in search and rescue missions and say they pose no threat to anyone.

Jordan's role has been criticized by Egypt, Syria and Iran.

The manoeuvres are being held under a military cooperation accord between Turkey and Israel.

Jordan declared that there is no justification for the Syrian and Egyptian criticism. However, Cairo believes that the manoeuvres come amidst an unstable climate in the region and therefore unwise to participate in these manoeuvres. Syria on the other hand is calling the exercises as an aggressive act.

Syria strongly believes that the manoeuvres are aimed against it, Iraq and Iran.

Condemnation and criticism of this event in the Arab world has been strong, an atmosphere reminiscent of the tensions between Arab countries and Jordan in the 1960s. Observers believe that this event is bound to further stress Syrian-Jordanian relations.

"We are not participating in manoeuvres. We are sending an observer to the exercises and this is totally different," Jordanian Foreign Minister Fayez Al Tarawneh told reporters early this week. "This is a sovereign decision which Jordan has taken because we read it as manoeuvres or exercises for search and rescue," he added.

Several leading Jordanian columnists expressed their dissatisfaction about Jordan's participation.

Mr George Haddad wrote in *Al-Dustour* daily, replied strongly to a statement that was published in *Al-Hayat* which stated that Jordan's participation as an observer "...does not target any Arab party but aims at improving Jordanian military qualifications for the sake of the regional stability." Mr Haddad asked "what kind of re-

gional stability" we are talking about, when it is carried and built by the soldiers of Turkey and the Jewish aggression forces."

Many analysts believe that Jordan has no strategic interest in these games and was pressured by the US to participate. Dr Fahd Al Fanek, a leading columnist in *Al-Rai* daily said that "Jordan has no interest in attending these games, for a simple reason: It is not a Mediterranean country, it is not a maritime country and does not possess navy fleet... pointing out that it is because American pressure that made Jordan participate."

Despite the nature of the manoeuvres, no shots were fired during the three-day manoeuvre, observers say the sight of aircraft and gunships crossing the eastern Mediterranean is ominous enough for countries worried about the growing military ties between Israel and Turkey and irked by US involvement in the Middle East.

Iraq and Iran have also criticized the exercise, which stems from.

Israel has fought several wars with Syria and views Iraq and Iran as arch foes. Turkey has its own disputes with the three countries.

Jordan, which signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994 that allows for expansion of military ties, announced on Monday that it was sending an observer to the exercise.

Iran has warned Turkey and Jordan that if they do not review their relations with Israel they would face isolation. The Iranian foreign ministry spokesman said that Jordan's decision to send an observer to the exercises was unwelcome and opposed by all Islamic countries.

Most Arab countries have indeed criticized the exercises and the military ties between Turkey and Israel. Iran has also reminded Turkey and Jordan that their actions contradict the resolutions of the recent Islamic conference in Tehran which drew attention to the dangers of the Israeli influence in the region.

Observers believe that Tehran is genuinely concerned that the new Turkey-Israel alliance is a threat to its security.

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Arab Bank appoints investment executives

OVER THE last few months, Arab Bank's Personal Banking Unit has been driving forward a new strategy designed to ensure that the Bank maintains its competitive edge and becomes more focused on the needs of its customers.



The Bank is now committing considerable resources to delivering a new standard of service for its Personal Banking clients, by widening the range of products and services available to customers. The development and marketing of a new range of investment products for existing and new customers is a key pillar of the Personal Banking strategy. The products are designed to complement the Bank's deposit and savings activities and are being structured to appeal to differing investment requirements.

Another important element of Arab Bank's strategy to focus on clients' needs, is the appointment of Investment Executives in each of the Bank's new investment products.

Arab Bank has appointed Hassan Bawaneh, Ra'ed Herhawi, Ammar Said and Laila Bataineh as Investment Executives in Jordan. All of Arab Bank's 16 Investment Executives in the Middle East were recruited from within the Bank and underwent a rigorous selection procedure and intensive training.

The Investment Executive's priority is to build relations with, and answer the needs of Arab Bank clients, though providing information on the Bank's existing and new investment products.

The latest product to be launched by Arab Bank in the Middle East in September/October 1997 was a Capital Guaranteed Fund, which proved extremely popular with investors, attracting over US\$100 million of funds. A range of additional funds is being prepared for launch in 1998.

Tickets go on sale for visits to Princess Diana's grave

Continued from page 1

tains some of Europe's best 17th-century portraits in private hands and already draws 9,000 visitors a year. There is a landscaped garden and a half-mile path that circles the lake where Diana lies.

"Visitors can walk around the lake with its black swans and down to the water's edge. The island is perhaps 20 yards away. Overall, a visit might take three to four hours," said Claircourt. There will be a memorial marker visible on the island.

What to display in the exhibition hall is still being discussed among Diana's family, said Din, but in principle there will be examples of her clothes and dresses, childhood objects, diaries, letters and perhaps books she particularly liked. "We want an atmosphere that will be very contemporary and modern, reflecting the woman it honors. We want to celebrate her life with something fresh that is exciting, a pleasure to visit. The last thing we want is a mausoleum," said Din.

The idea is to marry old and new: a clean, modern interior juxtaposed in the space of a graceful historic building. "Visitors will recognize some items like perhaps the Spencer family tiara, but others will be new to them," said Din.

Like the exhibits, planning is still fluid in other aspects of the new memorial. While



nearby property values soar, roads are being rerouted to avoid traffic snarls from would-be visitors who have no tickets and no prospects of getting any.

Some neighbors are apprehensive of a deluge of outsiders who may destroy the

seclusion of the Northamptonshire countryside. Still, every day now, in the depths of a cold, wet winter, fresh flowers appear on the tall black iron gates to Althorp.

"This is a learning curve time for us. We will evolve, never be static. If there seems

to be public demand for us to open for more than two months, we will consider extending the opening in years to come," said Claircourt.

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Lurie's NewsCartoon



(News Item: A band of pro-Government gunmen charged into a mountain hamlet in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, serving up tea and serving machines, killing 45 Indian refugees. Red Cross officials said.)

Our Say...

The meaning of the naval war games

THE THREE-day naval exercises between Turkey, Israel and the United States have come under attack by most countries of the region and for good reasons. The Arabs have a lot to fear from a closer military cooperation between Turkey and Israel, blessed and sponsored by the United States.

The region has suffered in the past decades from the policy of enforced pacts and alliances that were concocted by alien powers whose main objective was to secure their interests in the region. The notorious Baghdad Pact comes to mind. In fact, one of the main factors behind this region's long history of instability has been the policy of polarization, which expressed itself graphically in the 1960s and '70s in the many confrontations between Soviet backed Arabs and American backed Israelis.

Today, the naval maneuvers, ostensibly to search for and rescue fishermen gone astray, are but an expression of America's one-sided view of this region. The exercises come at a time when the Middle East peace process is gasping for life, when Turkey's dubious role in northern Iraq is raising every sort of objection and denunciation, and when Israel's military build-up goes unchecked while UN weapons inspectors strip Iraq of anything that is even remotely related to modern warfare.

But there is no ill dimming at all on the part of the sponsors of the latest war games. There is a message in the exercises to all parties in the region. The emergence of this unholy pact redefines the balance of power in this part of the world. It sets America's friends and allies apart from those whose agenda might differ from that of Washington.

There is an evil attempt to redraw the map of the Middle East one more time before the close of this century. This scheme involves rewarding America's allies in the region on territorial grounds. We have seen this in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria with Israel; we have seen Eritrea and Ethiopia wetting their appetites in southern Sudan with US and Israeli backing; and today we are seeing Turkish incursions in oil-rich northern Iraq turning slowly into full-fledged occupation.

The emergence of this US sponsored pact will only lead to a new cycle of armament and polarization in the region. It will discourage development and the building of regional peace while turning neighbors against each other. These policies will claim lives, land and resources. In all cases, only America's interests will be served.

This is the time to confront such pacts with boldness and courage. The Arabs must read between the lines; that they are the prime targets of such an alliance; that they are the missing fishermen in their leaking boats that the navies of Israel, Turkey and the US are searching for.

Meanwhile, the Turkish-Israeli collusion must be a cause of worry for Turkey's Arab neighbors. Turkey remains an important neighbor and brother. Since dialogue has failed to convince the Turks of Arab fears and worries, the Arabs must now seek to escalate their objections.

Notes from the Levant

First week of 1998: The ghost of last year lingers

By Osama El-Sherif

Barely one week has passed since the new year was born and it is already promising to be a busy one for the people of the region. For keen observers like myself, there is no shortage of news from this part of the world. The Middle East is still the center-stage of world events and why not?

If one can judge the year by the events that marked its first week, then 1998 will be pregnant with events for the denizens of the Levant area. Here is my pick of the region's news that made front-page headlines in the past seven days.

The Israeli government under the Netanyahu leadership survived the budget test, but emerged exhausted and wounded after Foreign Minister David Levy's resignation. Netanyahu's foes believe his wounds are fatal and that it is only a matter of time before he succumbs to internal pressures and troubles. But others see it differently. If he survived the budget ordeal and Levy's departure, he could withstand anything else.

His premature political demise is his wishful thinking on our part and those who disagree with his extreme politics. But the man remains in charge. In fact the more vulnerable he seems, the more dangerous he becomes for the Palestinians. By appealing the religious and right-wing parties, where he draws support for his coalition, Netanyahu moves further away from a possible territorial compromise that is acceptable to the Palestinians.

Another piece of news that made headlines here is the start of the joint Turkish-Israeli-US naval maneuvers, code-named "Reliant Mermelad." The official objective of these exercises is search and rescue of, believe it or not, fishing boats! It's beyond me why such a noble objective is being pounded and condemned by most countries in the region, such as Egypt, Syria and even Greece.

For Jordan the news is the embarrassing invitation issued by Ankara to send Jordanian "observers" to attend the three-week war games. With US participation and sponsorship who could refuse such an invitation? Never mind that Jordan does not have a navy or even a fishing fleet, and does it make a difference that Jordan's only sea port is on the Red Sea and not the Mediterranean? Well, Jordan had to oblige and has sent

one observer in spite of domestic denunciations. And Jordan's foreign minister reminded everyone that Jordan was merely observing, not participating, and that such a decision falls within the realm of sovereignty—and that's that!

Another news item that caught my attention is the adoption, in Tunis, by Arab interior ministers of an agreement to fight terrorism. This agreement joins tens of other idle agreements covering various facets of joint Arab cooperation that were adopted in the past few decades.

The home secretaries seem to have agreed on a single Arab strategy to fight terrorism including terms that will facilitate the extradition of terrorists and prevent Arab countries from giving sanctuary to elements that other Arab countries deem as terrorist. Implementation of this agreement will bring peace and tranquillity to the Arab world since so-called terrorists, once we all agree to a definition to the term, will

be handed over in historic border ceremonies between Sudan and Egypt, Egypt and Libya, Libya and Tunisia, Syria and Iraq, Iraq and Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait, Jordan and Palestine, Yemen and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar, Morocco and Algeria and...have I forgotten anyone else?

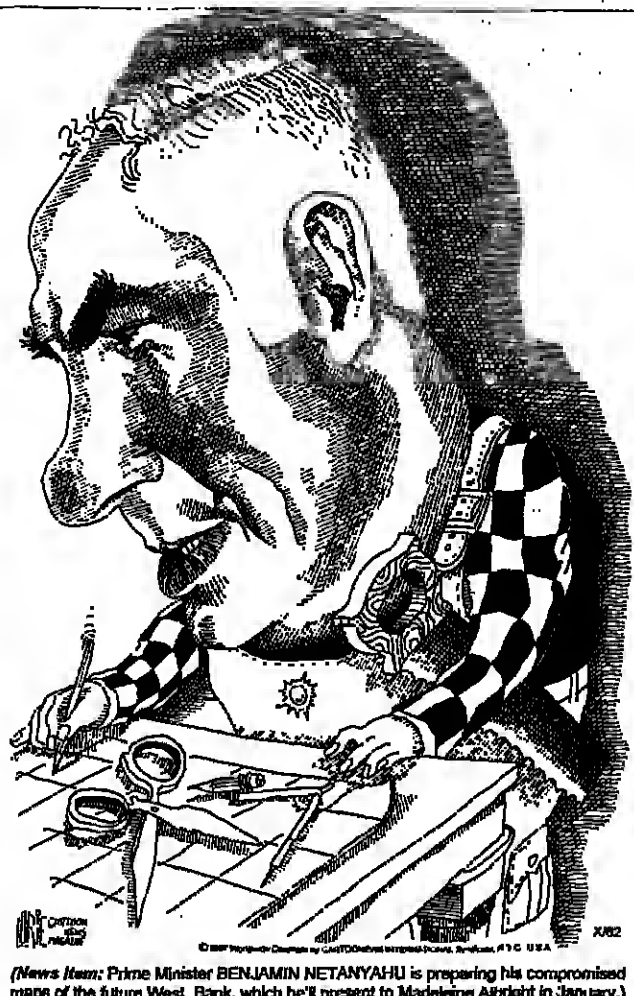
Anyway, we can all sleep better at night once this agreement goes into effect. Another triumph for the inter-Arab cooperation. Next in line, implementation of the joint Arab market!

The bloody events in Algeria occupied the front pages of newspapers all over the world in the first days of the new year and the holy month of Ramadan. It is beyond all of us how such barbaric acts against innocent civilians continue to escalate. The recent municipal elections have not helped either. The Algerian blood-bath is described by the central government as an internal issue. One Jordanian writer said the Arabs are acting as if the Algerian massacres are taking place on planet Mars. Now the government is arming peasants to the teeth to fend for themselves and this promises to make the Algerian stage in the coming weeks a bloodier one indeed.

Iraq remained a hot item in the first week of 1998, with a rocket attack taking place on UN operations office in Baghdad. Iraq says the attackers aimed at disturbing Iraq's relations with the UN. The Iraqi opposition says President Saddam's son Qusayy ordered the attack in order to intimidate UN weapons inspectors. Somehow, I don't believe the UN inspectors will be intimidated by Qusayy's rockets.

The fact is, however, that Iraqis will linger under the yoke of sanctions for the near future. One Iraqi observing Ramadan told a news agency that so long as Iraqis have dates and bread, they will not relent. I hope the Americans weren't listening in.

Overall, the first week of 1998 was no different from any other week in 1997. Tuning to last week's news gave me a sense of déjà vu, but not a yearning for things past. Somehow we all wanted to start the new year differently. But not a chance!



(News Item: Prime Minister BENJAMIN NETANYAHU is preparing his compromised maps of the future West Bank, which he'll present to Madeline Albright in January.)

Cold war is over, but hot war drags on

By Paula R. Newberg

LAST WEEK marked the 18th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. On 27 December, a local civil war in a remote highland country was transformed into the last great contest of the Cold War.

When Soviet troops withdrew, in February 1989, much of Afghanistan had been destroyed: millions of Afghans had fled, and civilian deaths were too high to count. By then, the war's major protagonists had also departed: Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev, President Reagan and Pakistan's Gen. Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, who secured his own tenure by crafting an alliance with the United States and Saudi Arabia against the Soviets, were no longer relevant to Afghanistan's future. For the war's most enthusiastic purveyors, Afghanistan was over.

But war in Afghanistan continues to this day. This anniversary will be barely noticed in the Afghan highlands, where this month's military blockade brought the isolated Hazarajat region close to famine; or in Kabul, where last week's nearby battles among competing military factions threaten the safety of a capital city now nearly destroyed; or in Mazar-i-Sharif, where warring factions have left some of central Asia's oldest, pluralistic societies scarred by the mass graves of recent fighting.

Today's war is about the detritus of war. It is about the aggressive acquisitiveness of Afghanistan's neighbors, for whom Afghanistan holds the prospect of transit lines for central Asia's natural gas. It is about small local militias seeking short-term alliances to see them through the long winter. It is about competing commitments to religious doctrine and political beliefs, all tied to the vagaries of military power.

Today's war is also about the many problems that plagued Afghanistan before its conflicts became the world's war: the dilemmas of an agrarian society that had begun to loosen the tightly woven fabric

of tribal loyalties; about conflicts over scarce resources and opportunities; and perhaps above all, about the nature of Afghanistan's government and state as it moved from monarchy to republic, from local sovereignties to the unexplored and occasionally murky territory that defines a central state. These were, and are, Afghanistan's agenda for the future.

But its current agenda is about the ways war defines life: the absence of heat and potable water; the recurrence of communicable diseases long conquered elsewhere; the pernicious effects of millions of land mines scattered across the Afghan landscape. It is about the loss of a land to the ravages of battle, but also to a divisiveness that despoils the country as controlling factions impose their ways on people whose consent is neither sought nor sanctioned. For however alarming Afghanistan's humanitarian challenges continue to be, its political agenda—the civility of local relationships in the vacuum left by absent political parties and parliaments—is the most daunting.

Afghanistan has been largely without government since 1992—when the Communist-leaning government of Najibullah was overthrown by a weak, temporary coalition of mujahideen, whose subsequent rule was erratic and short-lived. The Taliban movement that now rules the southern two-thirds of the country has imposed a semibalance of order defined by edicts and social prohibitions, but its first concern is military conquest: its opponents in the north, whose directives are less frequent, are also consumed by military expediency.

Military might and empty political space have immediate consequences. Whatever money is available to fighting factions is devoted to war: Afghanistan's sole means of systematic relief and rehabilitation is foreign assistance. The ingenuity of a few traders, and the mobility of refugees who work in neighboring

countries, cannot provide enough resources to rebuild a war-torn country. Without a legitimized government, it is hard to discover and understand citizen opinions and priorities; without a legitimized government, it is difficult to understand the rules, and conflicting responses to them, that now define the public environment for Afghan citizens.

Most noticeably, the absence of public voice has meant that Afghan citizens—particularly women living under Taliban rule—have been caught between local dictate and the international standards that accompany the provision of international assistance. International aid brings with it the world's assumptions about what constitutes the proper treatment of women, respect for human rights, notions of social equity—standards that offer a vision of a better life, but also a consistency of purpose that often eludes the complexities of war.

Overseas observers tend to dramatize the problems Afghan women face by drawing attention to the mandatory burka that drapes them in public. This curtain obscures the concrete deprivations that accompany segregation: restrictions on the use of public transport, prohibitions against working and attending school, the lack of access to medical facilities in the absence of female doctors—all remove women from services they and their families need to survive.

Universal-sounding dictates, however, do not have universal effects. Strictures that constrain urban women do not always affect rural areas similarly, and even rural Afghanistan offers a variegated window on the intersection of former opportunities and future possibilities. This diversity does not lessen the dangers of discrimination, but underscores them: It seems almost impossible to build a road through the thicket of cultural practices, ideological contest and international law that is wide enough for Afghan women to traverse.

It is for this reason that US

Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright's journey last month to a refugee camp in Peshawar, Pakistan, near the Afghan border, offered significance without adequate substance. Albright told schoolgirls their futures depend on precisely the opportunities not available to them in Afghanistan, but she offered no guidance for opening schools in Kabul or returning educated women to work. By her silence, Albright reaffirmed what every Afghan woman already knows: that today's war has become a contest about the future for Afghanistan's women and by extension, the durability of its heterogeneous society.

Albright left other truisms unspoken as well: that no peace is durable without the consent of Afghan citizens, and that the path to peace is obstructed by fighting factions fueled by outsiders whose stake in war has overwhelmed Afghanistan's stake in peace. A few weeks after Albright's visit, a joint Russia-U.S. statement exhorted fighting factions to renew a peace process that the United Nations had already declared to be virtually dead. Last week, Pakistan's prime minister, representing a government long suspected of supporting the Taliban, initiated meetings with the Taliban's opposition.

Whether this is posturing or represents calls for new concern is still unclear. But if this anniversary of the beginning of war is also read as an obituary for its possible ending, we would all be making a terrible mistake. The world that fought a proxy war in Afghanistan for nine years, and then ignored its travails for another nine years, has a responsibility to see Afghanistan through to a future that it—and all its people—can call its own.

Newberg is a senior associate at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service.

Middle East Beat by Khairi Janbek

Style and Substance

MAPS ARE being drawn, and counter maps are being re-drawn, and we are still none the wiser as far as the Palestinian state, that everyone is talking about is concerned. Percentages emerge to be followed by more percentages, without either, the Israelis or the Palestinians looking convinced in what they are drawing.

In the middle, the Americans are very keen to provide humanity with an important paradigm for peace-making, hence their continued request for those maps to materialize. The whole outlook seems to be characterized by bravado rather than substance, and shows that style can easily be victorious over substance. Emphasis on style is a phenomenon that permeates all walks of life, all over the world, but we must accept the fact that, losing content in favour of style, is what creates the impasses in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

And this has been pronounced without any doubt, with the resignation, or attempt of it, of Mr. Levi, and the threats of Mr. Mordachai to that effect. Not much is expected in this context, as the displacement of Geshter will not affect a great deal the direction of the Netanyahu government, as there will always be allies and silent supporters from outside the coalition, therefore, style is what matters in this case of resignation, rather than the substance of it.

The question of peace, plays a very minor role in the list of Mr. Levi's grievances, and though seemingly putting the Netanyahu cabinet in a tight spot, in reality, it provides him with a breathing space, to have a more homogeneous cabinet, that he can exist with in a proper symbiotic relationship. The two tracks he is likely to follow of enhancing the ideological content of his cabinet, and buying off the favors of his partners, are very likely to affect the direction of the negotiations with the PNA.

For almost all his partners are against giving more concessions to the Palestinians, that is of course when they are not concerned with more particular and specific issues, related to the Jewish faith, and the absorption of Russian emigrants. At this point Mr. Netanyahu is likely to have a free hand in fusing his beliefs with those of his partners. Even Mr. Mordachai is complaining only in terms of the lack of fiscal plans to be presented to the USA and the Palestinians, which Mr. Netanyahu will not readily provide, because the inconvenience presented to him by Mr. Levi's influence has been elided. Therefore, we are likely to witness more eulogizing to the Israeli-Palestinian relations, that are not likely to be resolved short of the American administration enforcing its own will over the Knesset.

Unfortunately, the resignation of Mr. Levi is merely a question of style rather than of any content that may be of interest to us as Arabs. For the detractors of Mr. Netanyahu, there seems to be more opportunities now, to topple his government, while for his supporters, there is an ideal chance now, to remedy the uncomfortable situation created by the presence of Geshter in the government, and proceed more confidently with his own brand of Likud ideology, with the support of his coalition partners.

There is no point in over-emphasizing the divisions in Israel, for those have been there since the signing of the peace, but what is important, is the realization that, it is content and substance that are likely to create the atmosphere, in which peace and reconciliation may be enhanced, rather than bravado and theatrics.

For those who wish Mr. Netanyahu to fall, one can only say that, it is not likely to happen now, but perhaps, it will happen at one point if he continues to head a cabinet dominated by narrow sectarian influences.

Letters to the Editor

Humane and logical In need of friends

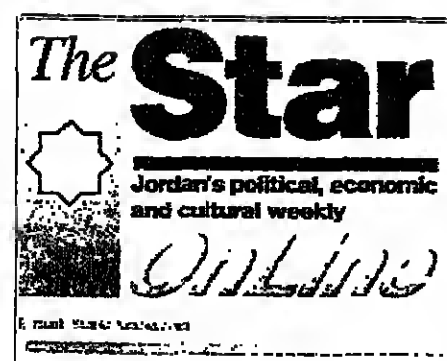
To The Editor,

To The Editor,

Your proposed New Year's resolution

My name is Jerzy Matuszcak. I am 41

is both humane and logical (Nites from the Levant, The Star 1 January, 1998). It will be hard for such a proposal to fail in gaining wide spread support from North American people. However, the thought process must be presented to them with the eloquence you have demonstrated. I wish you (Jordanian) success.



Peter Daniels
Toronto, Canada

E-mail: matuszcak@kr.onet.pl



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Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

Osama El-Sherif

Managing Editor

Dr Marwan Al Asmar

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USA & Canada US\$ 200.

Letters to the editor: Will be edited for brevity, must contain name and address of sender.

Business scene

■ Petra for Engineering Industries, which was the first to receive the ISO 900 certificate in 1996, is awarded the European CE signal given for safety in industry. It is the first Jordanian company to get such a certificate, and thus is able to enter the international markets with much strength and confidence.

■ Jordanian-Saudi trade witnessed remarkable growth since 1991. The trade balance is in favor of Jordan as its exports to Saudi Arabia reached JD 537.8 million, while imports were JD 45.3 million. In 1995 Jordanian exports to Saudi Arabia totalled 70.3 million, but rose in 1996 to JD 129.6 million. Jordanian imports from Saudi Arabia were JD 91.4 million, against JD 91.5 million in 1996. In the first 10 months of last year, Jordanian imports to the Kingdom stood at JD 85.3 million. Among Jordanian exports to Saudi Arabia are: fruits, cement, fertilizers, chemicals, detergents, shoes, and ovens. Saudi exports to Jordan include dry dates, crude sulphur, polyethylene, polypropylene, steel products, air conditioning units and aluminium industries.

■ The year 1997 was outstanding for the Jordan Phosphate Mines Co. It has inaugurated two major projects with Japan and India to attract more investment activities in the Kingdom. Also, Jordan Phosphate Mines concluded a partnership agreement with the Norwegian Norsk Hydro to build industrial complexes at Al Sheldiyab and Aqaba. Such complexes are designated to create a stable market to promote nearly 1.5 million tons of phosphate per year. The company's output recorded a 12 percent rise compared with 1996, and its sales also went up 8.4 percent in 1997 compared with 1996. The company produced about 323,000 tons of phosphoric acid in 1997 against 325,000 tons in 1996.

Foreign Exchange

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SFr	0.4801	0.4825
FFr	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEU	0.3667	0.3685
LIT (100)	0.0419	0.0421

Industrial productivity set to rise for '98

Trade Ministry continues to simplify investment procedure

Iham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

THE INDUSTRIAL sector in Jordan is expected to prosper in 1998. This is in light of new development schemes in the national economy.

There are about 23,500 industrial companies, with a labor force of 147,000.

The 1990-1995 period saw a noticeable rise in the volume of new industrial concerns at a 50 percent average.

Advanced engineering industries have been introduced such as television, and video production. This is besides improvements in pharmaceuticals.

Generally speaking industrial companies in Jordan are diverse. They include drugs, foodstuffs, chemicals, plastic, agriculture, and construction materials. Added to these is phosphate and potash, which provide the Kingdom's coffers with high earnings.

Total registered investments in all sectors went up from JD 162.6 million in 1992 to JD 768 million in 1996, according to latest statistics released by the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

Despite the fact that almost all sectors (including industry, agriculture, constructions, trade and services) hiked up between the 1992-1996 period, the industrial sector took the lion's share of investments.

Credit must be given to the private sector for its role in industrial investments. It is well-known internationally that the private sector has a major role in economic development.

Thus, new challenges facing local industry after the signing of the association agreement



Industry is coming to be seen as the future for this country

with the EU will help greatly in restructuring this sector.

The only option is to stick to high standards and quality, to face international competition, as experts argue.

"Such quality doesn't only apply to the kind of production but to the high standards of production systems and methods earmarked," says Dr Ahmad Al Hindawi, director of the Industrial Development Directorate at the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

This issue is crucial to guarantee sustainability and profitability of industrial companies.

As most companies are short- and medium-size enterprises, efforts should be intensified to boost their performance and productivity.

However, some industrialists continue to express concern about the EU-Jordanian associ-

ation agreement and feel that they will either be lost amidst high tech industries or are fearful of the consequences of opening up markets. And this includes the issue of dumping. Some even describe the pact as creating "incompatible competition."

That also justifies the repeated calls of industrialists, headed by the Amman Chamber of Industry to exempt inputs from customs duties and reduce tariffs on final outputs.

But Dr Hindawi draws on the Tunisian experiment after signing its partnership agreement with the EU.

According to Tunisian officials, about 30 percent of their factories did not face any problem in adaptation, however less than 30 percent faced some problems at the start. This implies that there is optimism as far as Jordan is concerned.

Jordanian companies are up to the challenge. So far, about 65 industrial and services companies have got the ISO 9000 certification.

Getting into global blocs and association pacts is not an end in itself. "It is rather a mechanism or an effective tool to achieve certain objectives. It's to benefit our national economy and guarantee sustainable development," Dr Hindawi adds.

To enhance industrial performance, the Directorate is currently working on a strategy to encourage industrial investments, mainly big enterprises with high capital, improve legislations and laws linked to encourage industrial investments and provide investors with incentives to pump fundings into the market.

Also among the Directorate's priorities are to study the

exemption of industrial inputs from duties, work to increase industrial awareness among investors to be acquainted with Jordan's laws in term with income tax, customs, etc) and eliminate bureaucratic practices in some official departments.

Today getting an application for industrial registration doesn't take investors more than 10 minutes while in the past it used to require repeated visits to such departments, and sometimes such routine killed many investment opportunities.

In the near future, the Ministry of Industry is planning to establish a "one-stop shop," so that investors can do their business under one roof, easily and comfortably.

As industry plays a great role in reviving the movement of internal and external trade, it also contributes a great deal in creating new jobs, and reduces unemployment.

From 1991 to 1995, investments in new industrial companies reached JD 632 million. According to the Ministry of Trade, new employments in this sector exceeded 58,000 jobs.

Currently the Ministry is studying a package of draft laws to be approved soon such as the protection of national production draft law, the intellectual property, competition and prohibiting monopolistic practices, insurance, agents and commercial brokers, trade marks, industry and trade letters patent. Some of these draft laws are in their final stage, while others are either at the Prime Ministry or awaiting approval of the Lower House.

Hong Kong anxiety over bird flu grows

By Keith K. Richmond

HONG KONG—Despite government vows that this week's mass poultry slaughter would ensure that no chickens will be allowed to walk free in the territory, Hong Kong authorities Friday said repeated sightings of the bird flu virus, which is suspected of carrying a new strain, have raised concerns.

After a long time, residents have realized that the disease is not just a threat to the poultry industry but may become a danger to the population. "Bird flu" virus after stray animals were seen roaming the streets of some of the densely populated areas.

Government officials said they must control the disease, as the virus, and its potential for mutation, is a public health disaster, but a public relations one as well.

Hong Kong's Chinese-appointed chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, conceded Friday that the government had made mistakes in its handling of the bird flu outbreak in which 15 persons are confirmed to have fallen ill and six others may have. In the most recent case, a 3-year-old boy was stricken with the disease, which is an avian form of influenza known as A H5N1. Four of the victims have died.

"We are looking at

these things very urgently," Tung said after an emergency meeting of his advisers. "We hope these will be all sorted out sometime soon."

The government announced its mass poultry slaughter last Sunday—24 hours after saying such a dramatic step was unnecessary—and then pledged

the job would be completed within a day. Five days after the campaign began, the government reported that it has killed some 1.3 million chickens and other susceptible poultry including geese, ducks and quail—but it also conceded that thousands of chickens remain alive and that Hong Kong is home to more chicken farms

than previously known.

Agriculture and Fisheries Department Director Leslie Wei—who vowed that "no chickens will be allowed to walk free"—has become the subject of much of the criticism since her department took the lead role in the slaughter campaign. "I'm not making any excuses," she said, "but during the operation, more farms emerged."

She said her department was investigating how chicken farms were operating without the government's knowledge.

In addition, some chickens were known to have escaped the slaughter by poking their way out of the sealed plastic garbage bags that were to have been their tombs. The bags had been pumped full of carbon dioxide to kill the birds, but in depots where the bags were piled high, chickens could be seen moving and poking around inside.

Panicked Hong Kong residents reported seeing chickens strolling on the grounds of housing developments. They also

reported seeing chicken carcasses strewn about, often near where children might play.

The Agriculture and Fisheries Department Friday said in a statement it is "conducting with mopping-up operations to check whether some live chickens had been missed out and whether there were carcasses uncollected." The department set up a special chicken hotline to report any live chicken sightings.

Residents also reported that stray dogs, cats and rats were seen eating through the bags containing chicken carcasses, raising fears that they might become new carriers of the disease. Health officials at Hong Kong University immediately began testing dogs, cats and rats to see if they had any traces of "bird flu." And some officials left open the possibility that the unprecedented slaughter could be extended to other animals if they were found capable of transmitting the virus.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



"Please... We're from Hong Kong..." (News Item: The Hong Kong government announced that it would kill every chicken in the territory—more than a million—to combat the deadly strain of flu that has already caused several deaths.)

Bad times prompt good crowds at Japanese shrines

By Mary Jordan

TOKYO—The Japanese economy is reeling, many people are depressed—and that was a perfect combination for Shigeo Yoshida to make a killing on New Year's.

Puffing a cigarette inside his 300-year-old Shinto shrine at midnight, Yoshida, a priest in white and purple robes, said there is nothing like a rotten economy to get the Japanese people praying and making cash offerings to the heavens.

"I can tell you when times are good and people have fat salaries and bonuses, things aren't great for us," he explained. "We get more donations when there is suffering."

Religion is one of the few businesses doing well here these days. The end of 1997 brought the biggest bankruptcies of Japanese financial institutions since World War II, a rise in unemployment and a fear that the worst is yet to come. As much of Asia was knocked to its knees with an economic crisis, the world's second-largest economy did not escape the lashing.

But for New Year's, the most important holiday in Japan, the country has virtually shut down for the rest of the week—the stock market reopened Jan. 5—and that has given millions a quiet reprieve from the relentless bad financial news.

Following centuries-old tra-

ditions, as many as 90 million Japanese people are expected to visit neighborhood shrines and temples over the next few days. That means three out of every four people will go to a favorite shrine or temple to bow their heads, offer a prayer or reflect on the new year. Some visitors will ring bells and buy good-luck charms on sale at the outdoor booths. Others will join the throngs drinking Japanese rice wine and eating rice cakes in the winter air.

The smell of burning paper—often calendars and other documents related to the outgoing year—wafts from outdoor fires lit by priests and their helpers.

"In Japanese tradition, you draw a clear line between last year and the new year. There is great emphasis on starting over at New Year's," Yoshida said.

This year already stands apart because of the signs of a hurting economy. Just about every measure of consumer spending, from cars to clothes, is down. For the first time since 1980, the number of Japanese who traveled abroad for the New Year's holidays declined. And even though it was not by much, nearly every economic indicator is adding to the national funk, including a new study from the prime minister's office that said less than 5 percent of people here think they were better off in 1997 than in the previous year.

"I, for one, am optimistic,"

said a cheery Denju Saito, who fixes the air conditioning in buildings near downtown Tokyo's Kotohira Shrine. Affiliated with Japan's indigenous Shinto religion, "People always need air conditioning. I don't expect much of a change in my business."

He said he came out in the cold at midnight "because it is a custom," not because he is worried. But just to be sure, Saito came to join the shrine's nine priests who specialize in praying for businesses to flourish.

Over the centuries, many Shinto shrines in Japan have come to be known as a place to pray for a specific wish—a marriage, a pregnancy, the healing of an illness. Kotohira is known as a place to go when you need more money. As the shrine's brochure plainly states, "It is a good place to pray" for "improvement of one's own fortune."

That is why Isamu Haba-busa, 77, brought his wife, daughter and granddaughter to the shrine.

"I am in the auto repair business, and you can't imagine how bad things are," said Haba-busa. "We all came to pray for our health and, of course, for our business."

And in the hopes of boosting his fortune, he spent \$10 on a good-luck charm that is supposed to bring his business better times.

Another businessman howed

BritishBank maturity proceeds will soon be offered to shareholders

BRITISHBANK HAS announced that shareholders in its Guaranteed Capital Investment Bond second issue (GCIB II-3 Year Bonds) will shortly be receiving their maturity proceeds. The returns for US dollar investors will be in excess of 84 percent.

GCIB II linked investment to the performance of the US stock market via the S&P 500 Index for US dollar investors and the UK stock market via the FTSE 100 Index for sterling investors.

GCIB II, like subsequent issues of these Bonds, incorporated a special growth stabilization feature which averaged the level of these Indices during the final 12 months of the term to determine the final return. After applying this feature the Bank has calculated that US dollar investors will receive a return for sterling investors will to the return of their full initial, whilst the return of 84.06 percent in addition to the return of their full initial investment, whilst the return for sterling investors will be 50.39 percent in addition to the return of their full initial investment.

Commenting on the bonds' maturity, John Pascoe, Chief Executive Officer said, "The return shows the tremendous potential that these Bonds offer investors who are prepared to take a medium term view. It also demonstrates to our customers the value of our membership of one of the world's largest financial services and banking organizations. Through the HSBC Group we are able to deliver world class products such as GCIB."

Mr Pascoe added, "Our seventh issue of the Guaranteed Capital Investment bond, linked to UK/US and the Hong Kong market indices, is currently running and will close on 8 January 1998. The response to date has been very encouraging. The recent 'corrections' seen in world stock markets potentially offer a tremendous buying opportunity allied to all the important guarantees provided by GCIB VII."

BritishBank is the largest and most widely represented international bank in the Middle East with 30 branches throughout the UAE, Oman, Bahrain, Jordan and Lebanon, an offshore banking unit in Bahrain and a representative office in Palestine. The extensive regional coverage is enhanced by its associates Saudi British Bank and the Egyptian British Bank. In addition to its Middle Eastern network the Bank has branches in Mumbai, Trivandrum in India and Baku, Azerbaijan. It also has Private Banking operations in London and Geneva.

BritishBank has been a principal member of the HSBC Group since 1959. With more than 5,500 offices in 79 countries and assets of over GBP 275 billion (as at 30 June 1997), the HSBC Group is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organizations. Among the other principal members of the Group are Hong Kong Bank in Asia, Midland Bank in Europe and Marine Midland Bank in the United States of America. The headquarters of the HSBC Group is in London.

The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly
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<http://www.arabia.com/star>

MARKET WATCH

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market:

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al Ahli Expatriates: 5.00 International Education: 2.86 Mobile Base Complex: 1.67 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bank of Jordan: 4.76 Livestock & Poultry: 2.27 Jordan Islamic Bank: 2.22 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jordan Sphero Chemical: 5.45 Arab Medical Supplies: 4.44 Universal Oil Industry: 3.66 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Industries: 5.26 Bar Ad-Dawa: 4.59 United Engineering: 4.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kem Bank: 5.14 Lebanon Expatriates: 4.76 Bank of Jordan: 4.55 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate Industries: 5.13 Mineral Water: 5.06 Jordanian Expatriates: 5.00 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Food Industry: 5.45 United Cement: 5.33 Jordan Arab Investment: 5.26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jordan Arab Investment: 5.56 Middle East Bank: 5.38 Jordanian Expatriates: 5.26
General Price Pointer: 168.316	168.740	168.576	167.620
Trade Volume: 308407	138968	797949	1353352
Stock Volume: 218169	382283	1052387	665913
Highest Traded Stocks			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Education: 83709 Investment Bank: 118990 Arab Bank: 142100 Arab Bank: 701680 			

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949

09.1.1998

Ramadan in Algeria is turning into another killing season

One Algerian journalist, speaking by telephone from Algiers on condition of anonymity, spoke of a general mood of hopelessness that has befallen the country of 28 million as it starts Ramadan this year.

By John Daniszewski

CAIRO, Egypt—In most of the Islamic world, Ramadan is a time for piety, sharing and warm family gatherings.

But in violence-plagued Algeria, the holiest month of the Islamic calendar has turned into the killing season.

Attackers swooped down on four isolated villages in western Algeria after sunset on the first day of Ramadan and in a rampage that lasted until dawn killed 412 people, among them children hacked with axes and babies smashed against walls, a newspaper reported last week.

Massacres blamed on Islamic extremists took more than 300 lives in the days leading up to the start of Ramadan last Tuesday, according to Algerian newspaper accounts, and authorities announced Wednesday that 78 more people were slain in the first 24 hours of the Muslim fasting month.

"The Islamic terrorist groups believe that before Ramadan or during Ramadan, they get closer to God when they carry out these terrorist acts," said Jamil Bourabrah, a human rights activist working with families of massacre victims.

The killings seemed to mark the beginning of another bloody Ramadan for the North African country. As many as 600 civilians have died during Ramadan in each of the past five years.

Hoping to reduce this year's death toll, the government already has launched a "vigilance campaign," urging people to stay away from trash bins and suspiciously parked automobiles where bombs may be hidden. The army also has set up extra roadblocks and increased patrols against terrorists around Algiers, the capital.

The three massacres last week that left 78 villagers dead took place in the western province of Relizane, according to the Algerian Press Service, the official government news agency. The attackers were unknown.

Islamic extremists, banded together under various leaders or "emirs," have been battling Algeria's military-backed government since the cancellation of January 1992 parliamentary elections that the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front was set to win.

By conservative estimates, 65,000 people have died since then. Authorities blame most of these killings on the extreme Armed Islamic Group, or GIA, a loose-knit militia that has made grisly and grotesque massacres of unarmed civilians its hallmark.

Some critics of the government, however, have raised suspicions that elements of the security apparatus itself may have directed or even carried out some of the massacres as a way to pun-

ish its enemies and turn the people against the Islamist cause.

The struggle between the government and its Islamic foes ebbs and flows. During 1997, authorities managed to impose a measure of security in the capital city. And since two notorious massacres in August and September outside Algiers, government troops have been stepping up pressure on militants hiding out in a nearby mountainous area that has been dubbed the "Triangle of Death."

But recently, more and more extremist attacks have been taking place in the west and central regions of the country where government forces are less effective.

At a village called Salsaf, near the western port of Oran, masked men invaded a mosque where a government-appointed imam was preaching Saturday, and shot and hacked to death 30 worshippers as they begged for mercy.

Attackers erected a false police checkpoint Monday near Mascara, in central Algeria, where they stopped a bus and killed its 14 passengers and the driver by slitting throats or shooting them.

One Algerian journalist, speaking by telephone from Algiers on condition of anonymity, spoke of a general mood of hopelessness that has befallen the country of 28 million as it starts Ramadan this year.

Last year, she said, people still held out hope for a possible political solution. New parliamentary and local elections were held, and a unilateral cease-fire was declared by the Islamic Salvation Front's armed wing, the Islamic Salvation Army. But so far nothing has brought an end to the violence.

One positive development is the crack-down on violence in and around the capital, she said. "This Ramadan, police have been more vigilant. They are very alert at night especially," she said.

During Ramadan, which marks God's revelation of the Koran to the Prophet Mohammed, faithful Muslims around the world abstain from eating, drinking, smoking and sex from dawn to dusk.

At night, it is customary for families to gather and stay up late with relatives, eating and relaxing. Another custom is to donate food to the poor for the "iftar," the meal after sunset that marks the end of the daily fast. But because of the violence, few Algerians dare venture out at night.

Bourabrah said that, because the Algerian extremists believe they are performing God's will, they have tended to become even more violent during the fasting month.

Having seen his own wife, a judge, gunned down by militants on Feb. 27, 1995, Bourabrah said he does not



The agony continues

believe dialogue or democracy will ever deter people of such a fanatical mind-set.

"The only aim of these Islamists is to have a state based on Islamic Sharia (law)," he said. "They will use any means...and democracy contradicts the plans and aims of these people."

But the Algerian journalist said the only way out of the country's suffering is through political negotiations. "It's going to take time," she said. "The solution lies in democracy."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Lurie's NewsCartoon

X/61 Dec 26, 97



(News Item: The state of Israel will be celebrating in 1998 its fiftieth anniversary. Its courageous citizens, however, seem to fight amongst themselves about the future path their state has to take: be tough and risk wars, or settle for peace.)

The F-word—fun—making a Comeback in Khatami's Iran

By John Daniszewski

TEHRAN—As a director making movies about women in Iran, Tahmineh Milani was not exactly popular at the strait-laced Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Her last film never made it into theaters because it showed an 18-year-old girl who wasn't wearing the "hijab," the Islamic headcovering. After that, she was prevented from making another film by a ministry bureaucracy packed with former Revolutionary Guards who, she says ruefully, loved only war movies.

But Milani persisted, going regularly to the ministry's film department to argue for her latest script, "Two Women." Last month, after four years of waiting, she received an unexpected reply: "No problem."

She credits Iran's surprising new president, Mohammad Khatami, a leader who is challenging the widely held belief that post-Islamic Revolution Iran is undemocratic, immune to change and stuck in a medi-

eval time warp. Thanks to him, Iran is becoming more open and exciting. Fun, even.

"We think there will be a lot of things coming," said 20-year-old Milani, a young woman whose life reflects a generation's frustration at living in a theocracy. She believes she was turned down for study by the education faculty at her university because her instructors did not find her style sufficiently Islamic: a long coat and scarf with blue jeans peeking out instead of the full-length black cloak known as the chador.

"We picked him to relax tensions," Milani said of the president. Her friend Gaele, a 17-year-old starting college, agreed. "Khatami gets into our hearts, and he sees the society in amore open way," she said. When the soft-spoken cleric took office in August, he ushered in a new era.

Based on a series of interviews conducted earlier last month with a cross section of Iran—including students, intellectuals, workers, businesspeople and government officials—aperture begins to emerge of this era, the most important turning point in this country of 60 million people since Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was toppled from power in 1979. In these dawn days of Khatami, Iranians feel more confident and freer to speak their minds. They have more daring choices at movie theaters and in bookstores. (One movie that has sparked a scandal, and long lines, is "The Snowman," to which an Iranian is so desperate for a visa to the United States that he disguises himself as a woman.)

Their new national soccer coach cares more about winning games than about taking his players to prayers. Non-governmental organizations agitate about human rights. And the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has discovered the WorldWideWeb. Reversing the Islamic Revolution is not uppermost on people's minds, but reform is making the country's institutions accountable and law-abiding, ending abuses of pri-

vacy and individual rights, and breaking down barriers between Iran and the rest of the world, including the United States. "What happened during the election showed that people are tired of all this stuff," Milani said. In Khatami, a huge and restive younger generation of Iranians has found its icon of change, its "supermullah." And the younger generation in turn provides Khatami with his political strength, because opponents know that he has the overwhelming majority of the people—20 million voters—behind him. But questions still abound: What will happen if Khatami goes too far in challenging the conservative religious establishment represented by the country's supreme leader, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei?

Could his gamble on openness lead to Iran's version of the fall of the Berlin Wall, or will Khatami preside over a brief "Tehran Spring" that ends with renewed censorship, arrests and tears? Figuring out Khatami and his presidency has become the issue du jour inside Iran. It also has risen to the top of the foreign policy agenda in Western capitals, including Washington, where President Clinton is weighing how warmly to respond to Khatami's direct overtures for dialogue.

Just as Khatami has taken a risk by speaking publicly in favor of contacts with America after nearly two decades of enmity, America must decide if it is worth taking a chance on him. Some hawks are urging the United States not to be taken in, suggesting that Khatami is merely a pretty window-dressing on an ugly regime, a decoy meant to get the West to ease up on Iran. But there is also a risk that by being too cautious, the United States could undercut him. "They (Iran's conservatives) are waiting for one mistake to pull him down," said one businessman from a prominent family who admires Khatami.

Until early this year, Khatami was a relatively obscure former minister of culture and Islamic guidance with religious credentials orthodox enough to get him past the screening of the conservative Council of Guardians, an advisory council for the supreme leader, and onto May's presidential ballot. But through some alchemy, this demure figure in a black turban was able to telegraph to the electorate that he stood for everything that the country's austere ruling mullahs did not. Theopetite, particularly the young, awarded him 70 percent of the vote in a four-person race, the largest margin for any candidate since the revolution. "Khatami's election victory was an avalanche. No one, not even the most optimistic in Khatami's election campaign, believed he could have such a huge success," marveled Iranian political historian Sadiq Zibakalam. "Since Khatami's election, there has been

a lot of soul-searching among many Iranians over 'what happened.' One obvious conclusion: Critics of the system are far from alone, and that has made people bolder. 'After the election, we can feel that the Iranian nation has more courage,' said Ali J. Dehbashi, editor in chief of Kew, an arts and culture review. "They dropped their fear and are thinking that they can affect their own fate. If you see something beneath the surface, it is because of this self-confidence. This is something new." What is driving the changes in Iran? It could be something as simple as not wanting to tell lies any longer. People complain that hypocrisy has become part of their lives—that they watch satellite television programs from forbidden, and hidden, dishes or listen to certain kinds of music—but that because of religious strictures, they must instruct their children to keep silent about this at school. How's this for hypocrisy? One young man in working-class southern Tehran, walking through a pleasant family park that the city built atop a now-raised red-light district, said he has no difficulty going out and meeting members of the opposite sex. He explained that in south Tehran, the "basij" do not bother harassing young unmarried couples because the families couldn't afford to pay a decent bribe. All the enforcement of the morality laws, therefore, takes place in swanky north Tehran, where the tribes are fatter, he said. Similarly, a young woman named Nagra, standing outside a popular pizza shop in north Tehran as cars with male teenagers cruised slowly by, told foreign journalists that she favors this particular restaurant because "the owner pays off the 'komiteh.' It's secret." Of course, it's so secret at all. Everyone knows. (Optional end) Milani, the director, said the strictures that outsiders always point to are not the things that annoy her the most. "Issues like the 'hijab' you can get used to, and after a few years of your life you don't care," she said. "But other pressures stay with you—issues like arbitrary break-ins to people's houses, or that they can train your child (in school) as they want, not how you want, or that certain people are getting jobs that they don't deserve." She hopes that two months before the election, Milani was thinking about emigrating with her husband, a successful architect, and their 1-year-old daughter. But for now, she said, she has changed her mind. "I have a better feeling here. With Khatami and the things he's talking about, people start feeling they are being treated with respect. It is not a land without law. Women are optimistic. Young people are optimistic."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Islamic revival raises new questions in Russia

By Susan Sachs

KAZAN, Russia—At this time of year, the overcast sky is a blank gray slate that reveals neither sun nor moon. So the observant Muslims of Kazan, in snow-clad central Russia, hooked phone calls this week to Mecca.

Their question: Have caught sight yet of the waxing moon? When the answer from the desert finally was "yes," icy Kazan joined faraway Saudi Arabia in declaring the start of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan.

Such adaptability—to harsh climates, to distance from traditional centers of orthodox Islam, to minority status and Communist repression—has long been virtue and necessity for Muslims in Russia.

Now, free of government constraints for the first time in centuries, Islam here is being put in a new test. As it rallies in the shadow of the increasingly nationalistic Russian Orthodox Church, as mosques spring up and a new militant generation of clerics jostles for power, the revival of Islam here is inevitably raising the question of what it means in both Russian and Muslim.

"My biggest goal is to live in an Islamic state," said Ramil Yunusov, a Saudi-trained 28-year-old teacher and director at the private Islamic Center in Kazan. "I can't totally follow Sharia (Islamic) law, being confined in a Muslim island inside Russia. But I keep my goal inside myself. Objective factors

prevent us from taking big steps."

But to worry about issues like dual loyalty and reconciling Russian law to Islamic law is "premature," he added, "because only a few people understand Islam here, while thousands have no understanding. They are asleep. First they need to be awakened."

The advent of Ramadan this year underlined as never before the contrasts not only between Russian Muslims and their Christian fellow citizens, but also among the majority Muslims in various republics and governorates that make up the sprawling Russian federation. In the now-ruined republic of Chechnya, which resisted a brutal two-year Russian army assault, independence-minded leaders have ignored Moscow's protests and started to implement a loose version of Sharia, or Islamic law. Public celebrations of the new year—a Russian, but not Chechen, tradition—are banned, as are Western clothes for female public servants.

In the next-door republic of Dagestan, which has seen bloody fighting between followers of the traditional Sufi Islamic brotherhoods and more strict Arab-influenced preachers over the past year, lawmakers reintroduced federal law and banned "extremist" religious groups.

And in Kazan, the capital of the Tatarstan republic, President Mintimer Shaimiyev pursues an Islamic-based foreign policy of his own, distinctive from Mos-

cow's. He has offered to loan money to Iraq, visited Muslim countries such as Egypt and Malaysia, and hosted a number of Islamic leaders in his yellow-and-cream residence high atop a hill overlooking the Volga River.

The point, said presidential adviser Raphael Khakimov, is to capitalize whenever possible on the republic's Islamic identity—not so much in the interests of Muslim fraternal feelings as to promote foreign investment and trade in Tatarstan.

"We do have an Islamic foreign policy but we are also pragmatic. We try to use any and all options for having good relations," Khakimov said. "When we are with Turkish Cypriots, for instance, we say we are a Muslim republic. When we are with Greek Cypriots, we say we have lots of Orthodox Christians."

But Tatarstan, like other Muslim areas of Russia, also has yielded to the blandishments of conservative Islamic teachers and scholars after the collapse of communism. Dozens of its young men study in Islamic colleges in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt and Jordan, where they not only pick up an orthodox education but a vision of Muslim self-rule that directly challenges Russian federal authority.

The habits and ideas they have picked up abroad worry government officials such as Khakimov, who calls these religious students "zombies." Men returning from their for-

ign studies already have caused tension in some small towns and villages, where they clashed with elders who practice an Islam based on local customs and dim memories of what is correct practice.

So far, the friction hasn't triggered the kind of violence that similar disputes produced in the more volatile Caucasus republics, such as Dagestan—in part because of the moderate Tatar tradition and in part because local religious leaders don't want an open confrontation with Russian authorities.

"When I see an old man or old woman praying in the wrong way, I don't try to correct them. Only the grave will do that," said Gusman-Hazrat Iskhakov, the assistant to the Kazan city mufti, or religious leader. "But I've met some of these hotheads who come back from the Arab countries. They go around proclaiming this is forbidden and that is permitted, and after half a year, they realize where they are."

"Look, Russia is not Saudi Arabia. Russia is not Egypt. We have our own national identity, our own national traditions and customs," Iskhakov added. "When these students come back full of ideas, we say, 'We are in the heart of Russia, surrounded by Russians. Be careful and cool down.'"

The Islamic revival in Russia has taken on a special potency, however, because it is not only religious in character but also nationalistic. Islam is a slogan used by Chechen separatists against what they call "impe-

Lebanon resistance carried out 800 military operations in 1997

THE OPERATIONS undertaken by the Lebanese resistance in 1997 numbered 812. The operations targeted Israeli and Southern Lebanon Army positions and patrols. Due to the attacks, 39 Israelis were killed, 95 injured and 22 SLA fighters were killed, 70 injured. Losses among the resistance numbered 66 killed and 27 injured.

Statistics from the Lebanese resistance showed that Israeli shelling of inhabited regions caused the death of 49 Lebanese civilians and injured another 130. Six Lebanese soldiers were killed and 10 were injured.

Security sources said that 5 soldiers affiliated with the International Forces, 4 Italian and 1 Irish, were killed in an air crash, while 6 Irish were injured in a mine explosion while passing with their cars on the Tel-Aviv road, which links their position in Yed Esheit with the city of Beir Yachon.

مكتبة النهر

The Dark Side of Camelot, by Seymour M. Hersh (Little, Brown, 498 pp., \$26.95)

Reviewed by
Edward Jay Epstein

IN HIS new book, *The Dark Side of Camelot*, Seymour M. Hersh, a prize-winning investigative reporter, attempts to radically revise the history of John F. Kennedy. Soon after an assassin's bullets cut short the JFK presidency, books by his former aides and speech writers, notably *A Thousand Days* by Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and *Kennedy* by Theodore Sorenson, painted a glowing picture of the young president as a heroic and honorable man, dedicated to advancing the interests of America, aided in this quest by the best and brightest men and women in the realm and who, in his finest moment, the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, courageously confronted and faced down the Soviet foe. In the variations on this theme that followed in the media, including movies, miniseries and profiles in glossy magazines, the Kennedy White House became a veritable Camelot on the Potomac.

Hersh sets out to remedy this unfortunate over-romanticization and help, as he puts it, "the nation reclaim some of its history." In its place, he substitutes a far more sinister vision, depicting Kennedy as a sex maniac, marital cheat, bigamist, speed freak, liar and corrupt politician who employed in his covert service Mafia chiefs, panderers, Communist spies and political fixers and engaged in stealing national elections, shaking down corporations for contributions, plotting assassinations and, in the very same Cuban missile crisis, secretly caving in to Soviet conditions. What is such a radical revision based on? Hersh claims his evidence is both new and substantiated. But, to paraphrase Dr. Johnson, much of what can be substantiated in this book is not new, and much of what is new, including his most sensational findings, cannot be substantiated.

Hersh is right that the initial books on Kennedy did omit potentially relevant information concerning his health problems, personal relationships and the involvement with covert actions. Much of this information was simply not available then; the Freedom of Information Act had not yet been passed.

But history did not stop with the publication of Schlesinger's and Sorenson's biographies in the mid-1960s. More than 1,000 books about the Kennedy family followed, creating a mini-industry. And many of these books, especially those published after the release of the report of the Senate Select Committee on Assassinations in 1975, contain essentially the same factual material about the covert side of the Kennedy administration as is found in Hersh's book. For example, six of the eight major "secrets" Hersh cites in his opening chapter—Kennedy's undisclosed health problems, the secret negotiations during the Cuban missile crisis, the administration's plots to remove Fidel Castro, his extramarital affairs, campaign finance diversions and the taping system in the White House—can all be found, often in greater detail, clarity and perspective, in Richard Reeves' 1993 biography, *President Kennedy: Profile of Power*.

What Hersh adds, pro his ideoprogmatic

interpretations. He assumes Kennedy's actions proceeded not from conventional political considerations such as winning elections or advancing his programs but from his personal vulnerability to blackmail. In the case of the selection of Lyndon B. Johnson as his running mate in 1960, for example, Hersh assumes JFK's motive was not political expediency, the most plausible motive since LBJ helped him win the election by carrying Texas, but that he must have been blackmailed into the choice. Then Hersh speculates on what dark secret could possibly lie behind the assumed blackmail. Seeking to prove this thesis, he is able to give a new interpretation to the previously established facts.

To be sure, in his aggressive search for the dark secrets to explain JFK's vulnerability to the putative blackmail, Hersh did develop new material bearing on JFK's alleged bigamy. JFK's alleged assassination discussions with a Mafia chief and Robert F. Kennedy's deliberate obstruction of justice in biding evidence of some of the above on the day JFK was assassinated. The problem: its provenance.

In the case of JFK's rumored liaison with Monroe, Hersh's investigation turned up a secret archive of correspondence between JFK and an otherwise unknown New York lawyer that included, among other sensational documents, a letter from JFK to Monroe acknowledging that they had an extramarital affair and offering to set up a trust fund for her mother in exchange for her public silence about it. Just before publication of *The Dark Side of Camelot*, this archive, which contained a number of obvious anachronisms, such as ZIP Codes before they existed, was determined by a television network to be a forgery. To his credit, Hersh excluded that fraudulent documentation from his book. But without it, the conclusions he drew about a sexual relationship between JFK and Monroe had no basis except for unsubstantiated celebrity rumors. Hersh's other discoveries all involve recovering snatches of lost memories from distant or defective witnesses, a questionable technique of reporting that he pushes to the limit of credibility. Consider, for example, Hersh's finding that JFK was a bigamist.

The rumor began circulating in the extreme right-wing press in 1961 that in 1947, JFK, then a congressman, had secretly married Doree Malone, a Palm Beach socialite. Both JFK and Malone claimed the rumor was false. When it persisted, JFK asked Ben Bradlee, then at *Newsweek*, to investigate it. Bradlee determined it was

'The Dark Side of Camelot,'

A revisionist history of John Kennedy



Kennedy before his assassination

a false story emanating from an error in a flawed book of genealogy (which even spelled Malcolm's name incorrectly). Some 35 years later, Hersh resurrected the story, not on the basis of any witness or document to the alleged marriage but on the basis of a piece of conversation that he managed to elicit from a 79-year-old Palm

Beach resident, Charles Spalding. Spalding, who, though interviewed many times before over 50 years, never before claimed a role, now told Hersh that he knew about the supposed first marriage because he had himself eliminated the record of it at the Palm Beach County Courthouse, saying, according to Hersh, "I went out there and

removed the papers." Presumably, in previous interviews after JFK's death, he had not remembered this extraordinary (and criminal) act.

But how reliable is Spalding's new 1997 memory of this incident that supposedly happened in 1947? Before Hersh interviewed him, Spalding had problems with his ability to recall routine information, which Hersh generously describes as an "impairment of his short-term memory." Such a deficiency notwithstanding, this piece of recovered memory about JFK stands or falls on a simple test. If the 1947 marriage registry in Palm Beach County, which was then handwritten and bound, was marred or missing a page, Spalding's story could be valid. If on the other hand the registry was intact and the entries consecutive, Spalding's memory of removing the papers could not be any more valid than the forged archive of Monroe letters. As it turned out, Hersh and his investigators were unable to find any such gap in the marriage records nor, for that matter, any record of a marriage application, which had to be made three days before the ceremony.

Nevertheless, on this piece of recovered memory from a person who Hersh knew suffered memory lapses and whose recollection was impeached by an investigation of the records, he asserts in "The Dark Side of Camelot," as established fact, that both JFK and his brother Robert "had lied in their denials to newspapermen and the public about Jack Kennedy's long-rumored first marriage to a Palm Beach socialite," that JFK's marriage to Jackie was not a legal union and that his children were born out of wedlock.

Hersh's second new finding, that Sam Giancana, a notorious Chicago Mafia chief, conspired with JFK to fix elections and arrange the assassination of Castro, was based on a similar device of eliciting new data from old witnesses. In 1961, Judith Campbell Exner, a former actress, "dated" both JFK and Giancana. This extraordinary coincidence was first publicly revealed in 1975 in a footnote in the Senate Select Committee on Assassinations report and became a sensational story. The issue: Did JFK have any connection to Giancana (other than a relationship with the same woman)? Exner was interrogated by the staff of the Senate committee and testified under oath that she had no knowledge of any relationship between JFK and Giancana. Afterward, she did not remain silent. She wrote her own book, "My Story," and gave countless interviews to journalists, often changing elements of

her story. (A 1988 interview of her in *People* magazine by Kiny Kelley, *The Dark Side of Camelot*, adumbrated Hersh's title.) Hersh expanded Exner's story much further: Instead of "not knowing of any relationship," with Hersh's help Exner remembered that she had served as a courier between JFK and Giancana, transmitting messages, documents and cash concerning assassination, corruption and election fixing and attended a secret meeting between these men at which such matters were discussed.

Hersh recognizes that Exner is not a consistent truth-teller: Either she lied under oath to the Senate about not knowing of any such relationship, in which case she committed perjury, or she lied in him 20 years later when she vividly described such a relationship. In the former case, there is a possible penalty for lying, years of imprisonment; in the latter case, there is no penalty for lying to a journalist but a possible profit and extended celebrity. In either case, her veracity was in question. Nevertheless, Hersh chose to assume that she had perjured herself (and lied in her own autobiography and other journalistic accounts) but had been truthful and reliable with him, and on the basis of her newly recovered memory, he transmogrified Kennedy into a Mafia co-conspirator.

Hersh's third and most extraordinary new finding is the cover-up that occupied the mind of Robert Kennedy, the US attorney general, on Nov. 22, 1963, the day his brother was killed. Hersh's first chapter, "November 22," is indeed a report of Robert Kennedy's inner thinking. He asserts, for example, that "Bobby Kennedy understood that revelation of the material in his brother's White House files would forever destroy Jack Kennedy's reputation as President" and that "Jays Bohdy Kennedy knew, President Kennedy and Sam Giancana shared a stolen election and assassination plotting" and "Bobby Kennedy knew... that Jack Kennedy had been living a public lie." In this frantic state of mind, he reports, Robert Kennedy immediately engaged in a frantic cover-up of these and other dark secrets.

But how, even with his legendary investigative skills, did Hersh manage to recover these new memories from Robert Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1968? Hersh did not interview Robert Kennedy; before his death, and Hersh does not list any source for these interior thoughts in his documentation. Nor could he have gotten it from Kennedy's own writings, since they don't contain them or even make reference to such matters. Hersh must have invented these facts.

Such license may serve to expand the universe of creative journalism, but it unfortunately does not produce credible history. When the pretensions of "helping the nation reclaim some of its history" fade away on scrutiny, this book turns out to be, alas, more about the deficiencies of investigative journalism than about the deficiencies of John F. Kennedy. ■

Epstein is the author of numerous books, including *Dossier: The Secret History of Armand Hammer*.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Baby blue eyes,

Man behind legend

Sinatra: Behind the Legend, by J. Randy Taraborrelli (Borch Lane Press, 559 pages, \$27.50); *The Way You Wear Your Hat: Frank Sinatra, the Last Art of Living*, by Bill Zehme (HarperCollins, 245 pages, \$23)

Reviewed by
Jim Hauser

OF GENIUS, a great Roman philosopher once observed, there can be none without a touch of madness. If you're Frank Sinatra, that ain't the half of it. Baby, here's a cat who guzzled booze by the quart, chain-smoked Chesterfields, huffed every broad from Hoboken to Tinseltown, hardly saw the light of day for the better part of three decades and threatened to kill anybody who got in his way.

Somehow—in between the scandals, brawls, attempted suicides and extremely unpleasant treatment of the innumerable women in his life—Francis Albert Sinatra found time to make 60 movies and win two Oscars. He was also, by all accounts, a hell of a singer.

Said to be in failing health, the quintessential Jersey Guy turns 82 this month and finds himself again the subject of biography. Two new books, by show biz chronicler J. Randy Taraborrelli and Esquire writer Bill Zehme, demonstrate that it can be both virtue and vice for a historian to also be a fan of his subject.

These guys got it bad. But where Taraborrelli stumbles trying to rectify the consummate musical artist he admires with Sinatra's off-stage persona as maximum lounge lizard, Zehme triumphs with unabashed worship of his beloved idol. With the deaths of Sammy Davis Jr. and Dean Martin in recent years, it dawned on Zehme that Sinatra is the last great American swinger left standing. Sure, Hugh Hefner is still around, but he's a pale, pajamaed imitation of the roving rogue once known as "The Voice."

"Men had gone soft and needed help," Zehme explains. "They needed Frank Sinatra. The writer went on to ask The Chairman of the Board to out-



The younger Frank Sinatra

line his "canon of cool"—from proper grooming to scoring with the dames—then wrapped it all together with the choicest quotes and anecdotes from Sinatra's well-documented life.

It's high spoof, really, tricked up to look and feel like a how-to manual for the aspiring "gasser." It's also a wildly entertaining read. Taraborrelli has bigger problems. Known for two earlier hatchet jobs on Diana Ross and Michael Jackson, he now sets his sights on the definitive bio.

Working with the cooperation of the notoriously protective Sinatra family, he struggles through the opening chapters, heaping layers of revisionist interpretation upon the less savory details of Sinatra's early days and peevishly taking prior biographers to task for having "got it wrong."

As but one of many examples, he recounts the infamous 1947 mob convention at the Hotel Nacional in Cuba, where

the then-31-year-old Sinatra was the featured attraction and most-special guest of cutthroat Lucky Luciano.

Taraborrelli chalks this up as youthful indiscretion—an innocent "walk on the wild side" by an impressionable Italian kid. Never mind that it was one of many Mafia entanglements over the years that would bring Sinatra to the attention of the FBI and make him the model for a character in Mario Puzo's "The Godfather."

But as the book progresses, Taraborrelli begins to take command of the material, seemingly coming to grips with the notion that Sinatra belongs to history and requires more than the services of an upologist.

What eventually emerges is a convincing picture of haunted genius—the saga of an immigrant son from hard-scrabble Hoboken with little in the way of natural ability, good looks or family fortune

who willed himself to greatness again and again as successive audiences discovered and abandoned him.

In spite of ourselves, we are made to care for an unrepentant hustler who dumped his wife and three kids to marry movie-bombshell Ava Gardner—only to be cast by her into an abyss of loneliness from which would spring some of the most hit-sweet music ever sung.

For the rest of his life, he would find no greater love. Not in the arms of Marilyn Monroe, Judy Garland, Lauren Bacall, Mia Farrow or the hottest dolls in Vegas. Not in 5,000 hour-long-soaked nights with Sammy and Dean and JFK and the rest of his rat pack "pals."

Thus did the man who lived by night come to fear the dark. It was then, alone and besotted, that he was most prone to gubbing an overdose, turn up the gas or cut his own wrists. "You gotta love livin' baby," he'd holler at his friends. "Because dyin' is a pain in the ass!" ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Potions, poultices and heroic surgery

The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity From Antiquity to the Present, by Roy Porter, HarperCollins \$24.99, 831 pages

Reviewed by
Jon Turney

PERHAPS BLOOD is the best index of the transformation of medicine in the modern era. A medieval doctor would bleed you almost as soon as look at you. You would either enjoy the sight of leeches growing fat on your flesh, or simply hold your arm over a bucket and let him open a vein. Somehow, you both hoped, whatever was troubling you would leave along with the surplus.

Today, blood is typed, tested and monitored; conserved, donated and transfused. It is the vital stuff which both sustains health and signals its absence. We are on intimate terms with all its molecular constituents. We are working on substitutes for when the real stuff is in short supply.

One of the main themes in

Roy Porter's riveting story is the new understandings of the body which underlay this gradual shift from discarding blood to keeping it at all costs. It would be wrong, of course, to dismiss pre-modern medicine as a sham. Its varied practitioners included as many keen observers, deep thinkers, skilled diagnosticians and dedicated servants of their fellows as we are likely to find today.

But if they were strong on bedside manner, it was partly in compensation for how little else they had to offer apart from words of comfort. Aside from bleeding, and perennial advice on the balance between abstinence and indulgence, their treatments were essentially a bewildering array of potions, poultices and enemas, along with occasional heroic surgery.

But although they rarely worked, application of these remedies was always based on theory, as well as inherited wisdom. One of the abiding impressions left by this astonishingly erudite historical survey of medicine is the enormous intellectual effort across

all cultures to try and understand the origins of illness. Another is what perilous lives we have led, especially since we created cities to live in. Porter's meticulous account of medical thinking and practice is punctuated by regular bulletins about which plague was ravaging urban populations in which parts of the globe at the time.

There is prodigious labour here, as well as generous helpings of wit. And if no-one can reasonably be expected to be truly stylish over 800 pages, Porter manages it most of the time. Ever prolific, he perhaps owed us a one volume history of medicine, simply because he is obviously the best person to write it. Indeed, the main competitor to this volume is the Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine, published just a year before, which Porter edited and for which he wrote four of the 10 chapters. The two are largely complementary. The Cambridge history is organized thematically, rather than chronologically, is less comprehensive, concentrating on the rise of western medicine,

and comes from diverse hands. Porter's new book is a personal synthesis of a broader history, and builds a single narrative, in one authoritative voice.

Porter is keenly aware of the ambiguities of medical power and authority. But it is hard not to read the evolution of western medicine in the last two centuries as a progressive story. A medical practice which incorporates vaccination, antisepsis and antibiotics, as well as a host of new aids to examination from X-rays to DNA tests, is incomparably more effective than anything which went before.

Yet, somehow, our expectations have outstripped doctors' achievements. He finishes by pondering the paradoxes of contemporary health care. Many of the first generation in history to consult doctors who, much of the time, can actually make them better rather than merely try to make them feel better, are still living. But our collective response seems to be to dwell on medicine's limitations, failures and mistakes, rather than celebrate its successes. We try to take for granted that we will live out our natural span untroubled by disease or infirmity, and ask for protection against more and more risks.

Perhaps these demands are a natural extension of past hopes, and no doubt they will impel further improvements in medical theory and practice. But let us also give thanks for what has already been achieved. This fine book is much more than a chronicle of the rise of modern medical science. It is also a splendidly salutary reminder of the precariousness and pain of the human lot through most of our history. After reading it, anyone who has ever attended a birth, overcome an infection by taking a pill, or had a pain-free operation, should be left profoundly grateful to be living in the second half of the 20th century, rather than any of the centuries before. ■

Financial Times Syndication

Top selling books in America

■ **Don't Sweat the Small Stuff... And It's All Small Stuff**, Richard Carlson (Hyperion) Essays that help fend off life's inevitable minor upsets (NF) (P) \$9.95

■ **Cold Mountain**, Charles Frazier (Atlantic Monthly Press) Love story and account of a man's journey home during the Civil War. National Book Award winner (F) (H) \$24.00

■ **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil**, John Berendt (Random House) Colorful characters, a killing in Savannah, Ga.; basis of movie (NF) (H) \$25.00

■ **Chicken Soup for the Mother's Soul**, Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Jennifer Read Hawthorne, Marci Shimoff (HCI) 101 stories celebrate the love of mothers (NF) (P) \$12.95

■ **Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul**, Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Kimberly Kirberger (HCI) 101 stories for teens about life, friendship and tough issues (NF) (P) \$12.95

■ **Angela's Ashes**, Frank McCourt (Scribner) Memoir. Growing up in desperate poverty in Ireland; won Pulitzer



(NF) (H) \$24.00

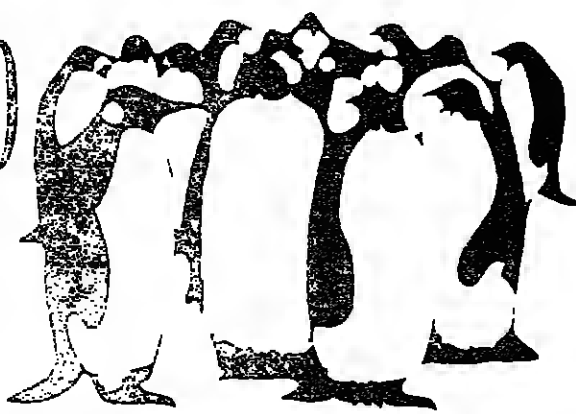
■ **The Dark Tower IV: Wizard and Glass**, Stephen King (Pume) Roland's life before he started the quest; continuation of the saga (F) (P) \$17.95

■ **Joy of Cooking**, Irma S. Rombauer, Marion Rombauer Becker, Ethan Becker (Scribner) Updated sixth edition of the 1931 classic has 2,600 recipes; last revised in 1975 (NF) (H) \$30.00

■ **Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul**, Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Jennifer Read Hawthorne, Marci Shimoff (HCI) 101 stories dedicated to sparking the spirits of women (NF) (P) \$12.95

■ **Tom Clancy's Power Plays: Politics**, Created by Tom Clancy, Martin Greenberg (Berkley) Is the Russian president's death and an attack on US related? (F) (P) \$7.50

Key: F=Fiction, NF=Nonfiction, P=Paperback, H=Hardback

ROUND
OWN

The twirl

Guests can enjoy a very pleasant night at the Villa Cafe, listening and enjoying the Moulteen, a band that has come all the way from Damascus. One of the highlights of each evening is the twirl—a dance that goes back to the golden days of folklore in Syria. You have to see it to believe it!



'97 remembered

Reshaping of Arab culture

AMMAN (Star)—The year 1997 was an eventful one for culture in the Arab world. Much headway was made in the field of cinema and the arts in the region.

Egyptian film director Youssef Shafin won the Golden Jubilee Prize for the Cannes Film Festival for his latest film *Al Masir*. However, the award was in honor of his contribution to the world of cinema. Mr. Shafin is a giant of a man. He is regarded as one of the fathers of modern Arabic cinema. During his career that spans over 50 years he produced and directed many films that proved highly controversial.

But despite this auspicious event, 1997 was beset with sadness. The Arab world lost a number of artists, poets and dramatists that will, in the long run, surely have an impact on international culture.

The death of Iraqi poet Muhammad Mahdi Al Jawahri in the middle of last year will be missed greatly. Al Jawahri, who was born in 1900 in Iraq, was educated in traditional Islamic sciences, philology and literature. Critics say his work represents a continuation and develop-



Shafin

ment of giant classical Arab poets like Al Mutannabi and Abu Al Aina Al Ma'arri.

And in the world of music the Arab world also lost arguably one of the greatest musicians. The Iraqi musician Munir Bashir unexpectedly

died at the age of 67. Bashir was a distinctive musician, who by his *Qud*, played a highly individualistic brand of music.

Mr. Bashir was a true Arab patriot. Through his music, he wanted to go to the fundamentals and the original concepts behind traditional Arabic music that was lost long ago by the passing of history.

In his final years, Bashir made his home in Jordan, and just before his death he was

preparing for a concert in Mexico.

But the sad story doesn't end there. Pianist Walid Agel also passed away. A Lebanese, who made Paris his home, he frequently travelled to the Arab world to stage concerts.

An expert in classical European music, he felt much at ease playing Beethoven, Mozart, Wagner, Bach. Mr. Agel gave many live performances at the Jerash Festival of Culture.

There was also great loss in the world of theater. Syrian dramatist Saad Allah Wanoos, died from a long terminal illness. He has written many plays and has had a great impact on Arab drama.

Because to cinema again, Egypt mourned the death of Saad Al Din Wahabi. Labeled as the "Son of the Nile," Wahabi was the head of the International Cairo Film Festival. His death, it was argued, even by Israeli newspapers, would be a welcome relief for Israel.

Wahabi was a vociferous anti-normalizers, who refused anything to do with Israel, and banned Israeli participation in the Cairo film festival.

The Arab world will also remember Egyptian actor Shukri Sarhan. He died at the age of 73 after a quarter of a century in the cinema. Mr. Sarhan did an unforgettable stint in Egyptian theater. ■



Al Jawahri



Wahbi



Bashir



Wanoos

THE FAR SIDE

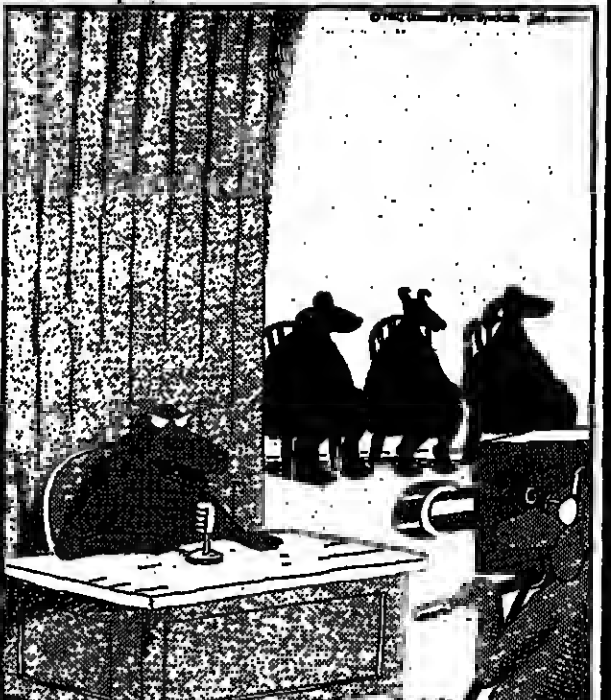
By GARY LARSON



Onward they pushed, through the thick, steamy jungle, separately ruing the witch doctor's parting words: "Before you leave this valley, each of you will be wearing a duck."



Every August, the fleas would test their endurance in the grueling Tour de Frank.



"Dogs that drink from the toilet bowl—after this."



"Whoa whoa whoa, young man! You walk the plank like everyone else!"

BBC celebrates 60 years of broadcasting in Arabic

THE BBC Arabic Service, World Service's first foreign language service, celebrated its 60th anniversary last week. To mark the occasion, the service broadcast a day of special programs including live link-ups with major cities throughout the Arab world.

Arabic is one of BBC World Service's key priority languages, and the service broadcasts for over 17 hours a day—longer than any other speech-based service except English. It is available on shortwave and medium wave throughout northern Africa and the Middle East, and on FM in Qatar and has an audience of around 14 million.

Despite its success, Gannon McEllan, Head of the Arabic Service is not complacent.

"The BBC Arabic Service faces growing competition from the pan-Arab media—and with international television, videos, local music FM stations and the Internet, there's much more competition for the time and attention of people in the Arab world. We've been very successful in get-

ting decision makers across the region to listen to us, we need now to do more to target tomorrow's decision-makers—students and young professionals."

Other plans to mark the anniversary include the launch of the 24-hour BBC Amman FM in Jordan, a concert of Arabic music as part of World Service's International Recital season, and an anniversary CD of famous voices and broadcasts.

Among the special programs are:

■ A Documentary Programme—veteran

broadcaster George Masri reflects on the major world events of the past 60 years.

■ Sixty in Sixty interviews with listeners who share the same 60th birthday.

■ Memory Lane—producers travel through the archives and give their personal recollections.

■ Yesteryear Stars—interviews with stars of yesterday.

■ Treasures of the British Library—Yassin Saffadi, former Head of the Oriental Department looks at eminent Arab treasures in the British Library. ■

Enjoy a Valentino night at the Cafe

VALENTINO CAFE is the newest in town. Situated in palatial surroundings in Sweifa, Valentino's is set to tickle your fancy. With a warm atmosphere, Valentino's which is located behind the American Embassy Street, promises to bring to you all the comforts of a modern cafe. In Ramadan, it's a special evenings every night. Patrons can come in right after Ifar for relaxation. While listening to live music you can enjoy the good old bubbly bubbly, order soft drinks, have a munch at the variety of cakes they have available, or if you are peckish just order one of the many sandwiches they have available. So come on! ■



For Sale

Original Lithographs by David Roberts. Views of Jerusalem, Petra, Lebanon and Holy Land. Also 19th century engravings by WH Bartlett

For information Telefax: 664805

SLAPSTIX

Statistics are like bikinis — they show a lot, but never everything.

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The Star's Guide

Programs on JTV from 10 - 16 January

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY
 2:00—Holy Koran
 2:10—Twinkle
 2:30—French Programs
 4:15—Prayers
 4:30—Believe & Behave
 5:00—NBA Games
 6:00—Neighbors
 6:30—News Headlines
 6:35—You Bet Your Life
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—Ramadan Tales
 7:35—Perspective
 8:00—Cinema Cinema
 8:30—Prism
 9:10—Time Trax
 10:00—News at Ten
 10:30—Feature Film: *How to Murder a Millionaire*
 12:00—Country Music
 12:30—Islam in a Changing World

SUNDAY
 2:00—Holy Koran
 2:10—The Pink Panther
 2:30—French Programs
 4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch. 1)
 4:30—Believe & Behave
 5:00—Energy Express
 5:30—Tarzan
 6:30—News Headlines
 6:35—America's Funniest People
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—Ramadan Tales
 7:35—Black Hat Chef
 8:00—Dad's Army
 8:30—Killing for a Living
 9:10—Renegade
 10:00—News at Ten
 10:30—North & South
 11:10—Jewel in the Crown
 12:00—Islam in a Changing World

MONDAY
 2:00—Holy Koran
 2:10—Hammerman
 2:30—French Programs
 4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch. 1)
 4:30—Believe & Behave



Ramadan Tales, shown daily at 7.15 pm

5:00—Riding High
 5:30—Animal Show
 6:00—Neighbors
 6:30—News Headlines
 6:35—Hope & Gloria
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—Ramadan Tales
 7:35—The Health Show
 8:00—Over a Cup of Tea
 8:30—Country Music
 9:10—Highlander
 10:00—News at Ten
 10:30—Emergency Room (E.R.)
 11:15—Cosmo (Doc.)
 12:00—Islam in a Changing World

TUESDAY
 2:00—Holy Koran
 2:10—Sandocan
 2:30—French Programs
 4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch. 1)
 4:30—Believe & Behave
 5:00—Stippy
 5:30—Square One TV
 6:00—Gilette Sports

WEDNESDAY
 2:00—Holy Koran
 2:10—Johnny Quest
 2:30—French Programs
 4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch. 1)
 4:30—Believe & Behave
 5:00—Border Town
 5:30—The Finder
 6:00—Neighbors
 6:30—News Headlines
 6:35—Step by Step



Amman cinemas

- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): The Cable Guy
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): The Juror
- Philadelphia I (Tel: 634149): The Peacemaker
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 634149): American Quilt
- Plaza (Tel: 699238): Scream / Al Maseer (Arabic)
- Concord I (Tel: 677420): Murder 1600
- Concord II (Tel: 677420): Mr. Bean

7:00—News in French
 7:15—Ramadan Tales
 7:35—Nature of Things
 8:00—The Upper Hand
 8:30—Challenges
 9:10—Kong Fu
 10:00—News at Ten
 10:30—A Woman of Independent Means
 11:15—Country Music
 12:00—Islam in a Changing World

THURSDAY
 2:00—Holy Koran
 2:10—My Little Fairy Tale
 2:30—French Programs
 4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch. 1)
 4:30—Believe & Behave
 5:00—NBA Games
 6:00—Prince & The Pauper
 6:30—News Headlines
 6:35—Big Brother Jake
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—Ramadan Tales
 7:35—Black Hat Chef
 8:00—Over a Cup of Tea
 8:30—Lois & Clark
 9:10—The Oprah Winfrey
 10:00—News at Ten
 10:30—Feature Film: *Oxford Blues*
 12:00—Music Show
 12:30—Islam in a Changing World

FRIDAY
 2:00—Holy Koran
 2:10—Roxpin
 2:30—French Programs
 4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch. 1)
 4:30—Believe & Behave
 5:00—Wishbone
 5:30—Metro Café
 6:30—News Headlines
 6:35—Small Talk
 7:00—News in French
 7:15—Ramadan Tales
 7:35—Life on the Internet
 8:00—Friends
 8:30—Brisco County
 9:10—Knife to the Heart

10:00—News at Ten
 10:30—Streets of Larido
 11:30—Feature Film
 1:00—Islam in a Changing World

PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS

SAMEDI

2:30—Bêtes pas Bêtes
 2:45—Extra large
 3:00—Cajou
 4:00—Magazine
L'œil de Colomb

DIMANCHE

2:30—Micro Kids
 2:45—Extra large
 3:00—Magazine
Faut pas rêver
 4:00—Magazine pour tous
Zizi

LUNDI

2:30—Bêtes pas Bêtes
 2:45—Extra large
 3:00—Thalassa
 4:00—Magazine scientifique
Cinq sur cinq

MARDI

2:30—Bêtes pas Bêtes
 2:45—Extra large
 3:00—Thalassa
 4:00—E = M6

MERCREDI

2:30—Micro Kids
 2:45—Extra large
 3:00—Ushoula
 4:00—Gnitez-moi ça

JEUDI

2:30—Envoyé Spécial
 4:00—Atomes crochus

VENDREDI

2:30—Les compagnons de la loco
 4:00—Magazine
Allô la terre

Programs are subject to change by JTV

F i l m

Russians are coming!... to a Theater Near You

By Ian Bremmer and Nina Khrushcheva

MOST AMERICANS thought that the failed August 1991 coup in the Soviet Union was cool. They watched the play-by-play on CNN and it was Miller Time—the United States had finally won. It was better than the hockey team's triumph at Lake Placid in 1980. Because this time there was permanence. Or at least it seemed that way.

But not in Hollywood. US films keep making America save the world from conflict-crazed Russians over and over and over again.

Granted, it's less disturbing when things blow up on the big screen than when they do at the negotiation table. In fact, things blow up only on the screen nowadays, while negotiations for the most part are constructive, agreeable and friendly. Even tough issues such as NATO enlargement haven't been able to upset the essentially good-natured relationship between Russia and the West.

So if the Russians are our friends, why is Hollywood still thumping them?

America's film industry just came up with "The Peacemaker," the third film last year wherein valiant Yanks faced off against Russian evildoers. Nothing much has changed from the heated confrontations of the Cold War era, with anti-Soviet classics such as "Doctor Strangelove," "Walk East on Beacon" and "I Was a Communist for the FBI."

The enemy then was the Communists. Now it's the Mafia—the Communist Mafia.

In "The Saint," the first 1997 anti-Russian production, a Communist Mafioso named Treliak wants to become president and divert Mother Russia from the liberal course she has taken. His son, also a Mafioso and a drug addict to boot, chases the Americans all over Moscow to prevent them from protecting Russian democracy.

In "Air Force One," another nationalist psycho hijacks an American president, played by Harrison Ford, in order to

exchange him for a Russian would-be despot who days before had overthrown a democratic regime.

Last fall's blockbuster, "The Peacemaker," serves up Mafioso Gen. Alexei Kotorov, looking to make big bucks by smuggling nuclear warheads to Iran. The fate of the world (read: midtown Manhattan) hangs in the balance.

On one hand, it's good, forcing huge stretches of geography upon unsuspecting Americans—places with unwieldy names such as

Why the obsession? America is nostalgic for the Cold War. Before, it was easy. There was the Soviet Union. There was the Eastern Bloc. If you wanted to be picky, there was Yugoslavia. There were big chunks of countries to make into an enemy. Now, despite the expansion of geography, the real enemy has been reduced to mere individuals.

The Communist Mafiosi are critical because, to the Hollywood equation, Russians need ideology to fight effectively. They used to have communism. That worked until roughly 1988. Then they discovered money. So now Russian fighters get wiped unless they're fighting for money. Hence the Communist Mafiosi.

This is ironic because these Mafiosi are hardly anti-American. Deep down, in fact, they want to be American. Capitalism created these guys. So at heart they make lousy villains. Recognition of this undermined "The Peacemaker"—Kotorov is only a go-between and gets smashed in the middle of the film; then we're left effectively villainless for the better part of an hour.

Hollywood should understand the problem better than anyone. Filmmaking needs good enemies to kick around. Fact is, new Russians couldn't threaten total domination of a paper hug. They may be bad but they're not grotesque. Grotesque is grandiose. Grotesque requires the desire to wipe out entire peoples systematically. It also requires a response from the entire U.S. armed forces. Rodich, Treliak and Kotorov don't cut it.

Does it suit the United States to hunt down single individuals? Not really. The world may be in danger, but it isn't anybody's fault. Call it the peace dividend. Call it the end of the Cold War. Hollywood can turn back the clock, but in the end America has nobody left to blame but itself.

LA Times-Washington News Service

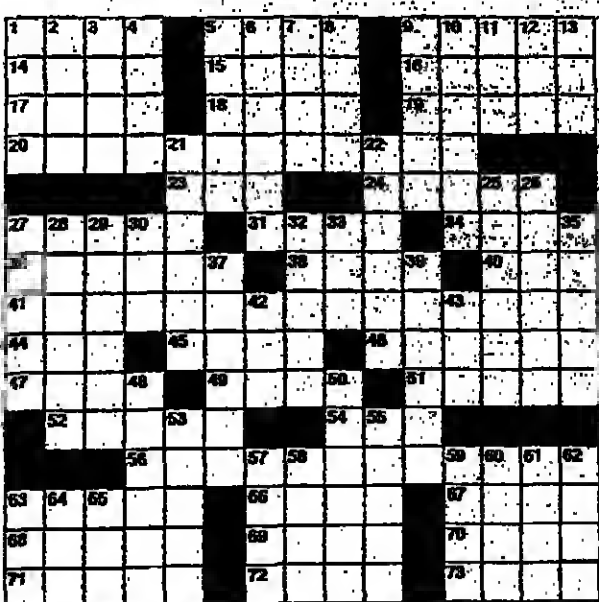


Air Force One

Azerbaijan, Mahachkala, Srebrenica. "Air Force One" opened with Americans taking out a Russian leader in Kazakhstan. OK, the Kazakhs were perturbed that we demonized their country with a megalomaniacal fascist baddie. But the fact that it was Kazakhstan that Hollywood was demonizing is a start.

On the other hand, geopolitical nuance aside, the message is still the same: America wants to keep the world safe from Russians. And let's face it, who else cares? Not the cautious Europeans, sitting around waiting for America to rid the Balkans of ethnic cleansers. Not the United Nations, with neither stomach nor mandate to handle the messy problems of the coming century. And certainly not our friends the Russians, who got themselves into all this trouble in the first place.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- ACROSS**
- Colloquial
 - Official
 - Jason's ship
 - Straits of coast
 - Capit. e.g.
 - Bank
 - transaction
 - Cowboy flick
 - Portico
 - Unemployed
 - Consumers
 - Georgia
 - state flower
 - Comet
 - Scaplanes
 - Tropical
 - lizard
 - U.S. president
 - Cut
 - Hunting expedition
 - Regretful one
 - Modern prof.
 - Chlorophyll region
 - One-time
- DOWN**
- Getz or Freberg
 - Place for a record
 - Salmagander
 - idolater
 - Puts on cargo
 - Cup of liquor
 - Poem of praise
 - lowen
 - sweetheart?
 - Filed, as a ship
 - Federal agent
 - Harbor
 - Gum
 - Dyle
 - Tardy
 - Gid
 - Yorkshire city
 - Gaelic river
 - Part of CED

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: The sun in Capricorn favors water and earth signs. The transition could create more confusion than good luck for somebody.

Aries (March 21-April 19). These days are intense. You'll need help to get past a tough assignment. An older person is asking difficult questions.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Paperwork dominates. Are those the Christmas cards you haven't sent yet? Play with a partner to finish last minute tasks.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Make private time for a romantic conversation. These are fun days, as you revive the traditions. They're sure a lot of work for you, though.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). You're pushed to take action. Choose the course that benefits both home and career, and the perfect partnership will become obvious. Make a romantic commitment even if you don't know how you'll get the money.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Words come easily so write letters. Stay close to home. That's where you're most likely to find what you're seeking. Frolic and fun dominate your life.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You want to buy everything. Race around and finish getting everything perfect. You'll notice you're calm and determined. That will make everything go more easily.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You're looking good. Make your wishes known to an older family member. It's now or never. Go shopping for domestic items. Spend to make your holiday bright. You'll learn all sorts of interesting things.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Past due requirements dominate. Don't schedule anything else. You are incredible. Focus your attention on a difficult task, and master it.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Friends lure you away from your work, but help you learn good information. It's not time wasted. Scurry to meet a deadline. There will be no time for frivolity.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The sun is in your sign now, giving you the advantage for several weeks. Use it gently to persuade an older person that you're right. Your friends go along with your ideas.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Travel looks good. If you can't get away, at least make the phone calls. An older person wants to set the agenda. It's probably going to be easier to go along.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Don't get crazy and spend too much on gifts. Of course people would like them, but you can't afford them all. Travel goes well, especially if you've done the planning.

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: You'll have more money for luxury items this year. A new career adventure will prove to be quite profitable. You're being pushed to change, in more ways than one.

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TONIGHT

GALLERIA 1 هاتف خلوي ٠٧٩٣٣٤٣ GALLERIA 2

THE CABLE GUY

8.30, 10.30

THE JUROR

2, 6.15, 8.30, 10.45

The Star
Online

<http://www.arabia.com/Star>

٠٧٩٣٣٤٣

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Exercices militaires tripartites

La sirène n'attire pas la confiance

Les manœuvres américano-israélo-turques, baptisées «sirène confiante», s'achèvent aujourd'hui en Méditerranée. Un tollé général a salué la «participation» jordanienne à ces exercices.

De simples opérations de sauvetage et non des manœuvres militaires stricto sensu, les responsables jordaniens ont tenu de minimiser la portée de cette participation, symbolisée par la présence d'un seul militaire de la force navale. Pour rassurer l'opinion publique, le ministre des Affaires étrangères Fuyez Tarawneh a rappelé qu'il n'y a pas de bateaux jordaniens impliqués dans les exercices et que «la Jordanie n'entrera pas dans des zones non arabes». Ces déclarations, ajoutées à celles du ministre intermédiaire de l'information Nasser Lawzi qui a démenti l'existence de pressions sur la Jordanie, n'ont pas dissipé les doutes et les craintes d'un grand nombre de parlementaires, de partis politiques et de commentateurs. Plusieurs députés ont dénoncé vigoureusement cette participation qui «conduirait à l'établissement d'un pacte et à l'installation de

bases étrangères sur le sol jordanien». Certains affirment qu'ils ont l'intention de demander des comptes au gouvernement pour une décision «incompatible avec les intérêts nationaux et arabes». Issa Madadat, chef du Parti démocratique, unioniste (gauche jordanienne) explique qu'à l'heure actuelle «il est nécessaire d'isoler la direction israélienne qui fait tout pour détruire le processus de paix. Or, poursuit-il, toute incursion sur l'extrémité de Negev ou sur la frontière de l'ouest jordanien ne sert pas l'orientation stratégique de notre gouvernement en faveur du processus de paix».

D'autres hommes politiques de l'opposition rappellent que la Turquie occupe toujours une partie du nord de l'Irak, «pays frère» à la souveraineté et à l'intégrité territoriale duquel le royaume hachémite s'est déclaré maintes fois attaché. Et puis il y a aussi les «intentions agressives» turques à l'égard de la Syrie, autre «pays frère».

D'ailleurs Bagdad et Damas, ainsi que le Caire ont affirmé leur hostilité à ces manœuvres. Le communiqué de la Ligue Arabe résume ces craintes en soulignant que «les exercices américano-israélo-turcs menacent la sécurité régionale».

La participation jordanienne, déguisée en observation, approfondit le fossé d'une part entre le gouvernement et le peuple et d'autre part entre la Jordanie et les pays arabes voisins en particulier la Syrie et l'Irak. C'est le constat que font de nombreux commentateurs. En somme, cette décision surprenante, mal défendue par les dirigeants, pose encore des questions sur les fondements et les priorités de la politique étrangère du gouvernement Majali.

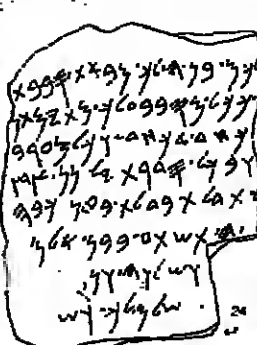
Suleiman Sweiss



Les manœuvres, auxquelles participe la marine américaine, entrent dans le cadre de l'accord de coopération militaire signé en février 1996 entre la Turquie et Israël.

L'alphabet populaire des Phéniciens par Véronique Abu-Nijeh

Au cours des siècles, la Jordanie a vu défiler pas moins de neuf systèmes d'écriture différents qui se succédèrent ou cohabitèrent au gré des influences culturelles et des événements politiques. La première écriture largement adoptée en Transjordanie est l'écriture phénicienne, dite aussi cananéenne, mise au point vers 1200 av. J.-C. dans la région du Liban actuel. Outre le fait qu'elle est la première écriture propre à noter les dialectes de l'ouest sémitique, son succès tient à sa simplicité. Elle offre en effet un alphabet de 22 caractères aisément mémorisables alors que les systèmes précédemment connus, le cunéiforme des Babyloniens et les hiéroglyphes des Égyptiens, étaient syllabiques voire pictographiques et complexes au point de réserver leur maîtrise à une élite de scribes. Avec l'alphabet phénicien, l'apprentissage de l'écriture se popularise. Ce système se distingue aussi par sa primauté dans l'histoire de l'écriture : c'est de lui qu'est issu



l'alphabet grec qui à son tour a donné naissance à l'alphabet latin. C'est donc indirectement aux Phéniciens que l'on doit l'alphabet occidental moderne. L'alphabet arabe lui reconnaît également un parent par l'intermédiaire de l'araméen et du nabatéen. Le grand nombre de documents rédigés dans cette écriture témoignent de son essor. Vous voyez ci-contre une inscription sur pierre datant du IX^{ème} siècle av. J.-C., découverte sur la colline d'Amman, à proximité du temple dit d'Hercule, bâti en réalité sur un ancien sanctuaire dédié à Milkom, la divinité des Ammonites. Le nom de ce dieu apparaît en tête du document. Le reste du texte est peu clair. Il peut s'agir d'une dédicace, d'une loi cadastrale ou d'une malédiction.

L'alphabet phénicien fut largement utilisé jusqu'à la fin du VI^{ème} siècle av. J.-C. Sous l'empire perse, il se voit concurrencé puis supplanté par l'alphabet araméen qui s'était développé en Syrie.

Relations jordano-palestiniennes

Partition fiction à quatre voies

Le Centre d'études stratégiques de l'Université de Jordanie vient de publier un ouvrage novateur sur les relations jordano-palestiniennes. Quatre scénarios pour se faire une idée plus précise de l'avenir du processus de paix.

au-delà du Jourdain et en Jordanie (...). On suppose que le Roi Hussein n'a pas confié en Yasser Arafat et vice-versa. L'ancien ministre jordanien Hani Kassawneh, confirme cette méfiance entre Palestiniens et Jordaniens qui, plus encore depuis septembre noir en 1970, a empêché le développement de leurs relations sur des bases plus solides : «Au lieu de rechercher une unité, les deux parties sont en compétition pour une illusion, à savoir que la solution de la paix peut être offerte par Israël».

À partir de ce constat mitigé, les auteurs établissent quatre scénarios pour l'avenir des relations jordano-palestiniennes.

1. **La dérive.** Ce scénario suppose que les différentes parties ne parviendront pas à se mettre d'accord pour sortir le processus de paix de l'impasse actuelle. Autrement dit, Israël poursuit sur la lancée des 18 premiers mois de gouvernement Netanyahu. Le processus de paix ne s'interrompt pas forcément mais il s'atrophie avec les violences sporadiques (affrontements, attentats-suicides) qui vont avec.

2. **La partition fon-**

tionnelle. Un gouvernement israélien avec une ligne politique dure accède au pouvoir et même le jeu diplomatique sans que les Palestiniens et les Jordaniens soient capables de reprendre l'initiative dans le processus de paix. Dans ce cas, l'État hébreu impose une autonomie limitée aux Palestiniens et entrave la naissance d'un vrai État palestinien. L'ANP s'affaiblit au profit de la Jordanie, qui intervient dans le contrôle des territoires en échange de compensations promises par Israël.

3. **La séparation.** Ce scénario prévoit l'établissement d'un État palestinien, distinct de l'État jordanien.

4. **La coopération.** Jordaniens et Palestiniens décident de rapprocher leurs politiques et leurs économies et/ou les



Malgré les apparences, la méfiance domine bien souvent les relations jordano-palestiniennes, même entre le roi Hussein et Yasser Arafat.

deux communautés s'accrochent sur un projet de fédération ou de confédération, des que l'indépendance palestinienne est acceptée par Israël (c'est le plan Beilin-Abu Mazen qui correspondrait le mieux à ce schéma idéal, voir ci-contre).

Quelle hypothèse est la plus probable ? Les auteurs refusent de se prononcer. «Nous ne voulons pas faire pencher le plateau de la balance pour tel ou tel scénario. Il s'agit ici de présenter la réalité politique jordano-palestinienne». Insiste Mustapha Hamaneh, ce livre permet simplement d'ouvrir le débat.

Nahed Al-Khlouf

Le point sur le plan Beilin-Abu Mazen

L'émissaire américain Denis Ross est actuellement dans la région pour préparer les réunions de Washington dans 15 jours au cours desquelles le président Clinton doit rencontrer Netanyahu et Arafat. Au programme de la mission de Denis Ross, la discussion du fameux plan-Beilin-Abu Mazen. Il s'agit d'une formule développée en 1996 par les deux négociateurs palestiniens et israéliens, Abu Mazen et Yousfi Beilin. Ce document devait être soumis à l'évaluation de l'ancien Premier ministre israélien Yitzhak Rabin, quand celui-ci a été assassiné. Du coup, le plan n'a jamais été publié mais de réputation il y

est prévu l'acceptation d'un État palestinien sur 95% de la Cisjordanie et de la bande de Gaza. Le reste est annexé par Israël. Selon les personnalités qui connaissent bien la formule, la Palestine et l'État juif poursuivraient l'objectif d'une confédération jordano-palestinienne avec l'accord bien sûr du royaume hachémite.

L'État palestinien serait démilitarisé au bout de dix ans, le temps qu'Israël retire ses forces armées de la région destinée à revenir sous souveraineté arabe. Pendant cette période transitoire, Israël maintiendrait des contingents militaires ainsi qu'une défense aérienne en Cisjordanie mais une sécurité commune israélo-palestinienne serait assurée le long du Jourdain et sur les frontières entre la nouvelle Palestine et Israël. La Jordanie pourrait également avoir son mot à dire sur les questions de sécurité. Par ailleurs, des forces internationales seraient présentes pour garantir le bon déroulement du plan. Le document Beilin-Abu Mazen prévoit aussi une administration israélo-palestinienne des ressources d'eau, le dédommagement et la réhabilitation des réfugiés palestiniens et une nouvelle ville de Jérusalem avec deux sous-municipalités.

N.K.

France Télécom face à la concurrence

Depuis le 1^{er} janvier, le marché européen du téléphone est ouvert à la concurrence. Les Français ne sont plus obligés d'utiliser les services de France Télécom, l'entreprise d'État qui jusqu'à présent, profitait de son monopole. De nouveaux opérateurs, la Cegétel, filiale de la Générale des Eaux, et Bouygues Télécom, débarquent sur le marché français. Pour faire face à ces nouveaux concurrents, France Télécom est entrée en Bourse le 20 octobre dernier, après cinq ans de tergiversations. Des actionnaires privés sont entrés dans son capital à hauteur de 23%. Parmi eux, les petits porteurs ont été 3,9 millions à se procurer des titres de l'entreprise de téléphonie, un record. Comment évalueront les services ? Au bénéfice du consommateur car les opérateurs essaieront surtout de séduire par le service. Côté qualité, il sera

Dans ces conditions, le service public du téléphone risque-t-il de se dégrader ? Attention, l'ouverture à la concurrence ne veut pas dire la jungle : le service public des télécommunications, inscrit dans les directives européennes et la loi française, sera simplement financé par tous les opérateurs du marché, publics ou privés. Le service universel (accessibilité à tous d'un service de qualité à un prix abordable, tarif spécifique pour les pauvres, cabines publiques...) restera comme aujourd'hui assuré par France Télécom. Cependant, puisque ce service recevra dorénavant un financement collectif, tous les acteurs du marché devront se mettre d'accord sur la portée et le coût réel des missions de service public.

Le Jourdain



Près de 4 millions de Français se sont portés acquéreurs d'actions France Télécom. Une entrée en Bourse réussie pour ce géant, cinquième mondial du secteur des télécommunications.

Nouvelles du Pays

Télécommunications

Coup de jeune sur les coups de fil

Début de privatisation de sa Compagnie des télécommunications, nouvelle numérotation, cabines publiques, la Jordanie a décidé de moderniser ses services téléphoniques.

Un pas décisif vers la privatisation de la Compagnie jordanienne des Télécommunications (CJT) vient d'être franchi tout récemment. En effet, le conseil des ministres a décidé de vendre 40% des actions de la société à un partenaire «stratégique de rang international». Cette opération dont est chargée actuellement une banque étrangère (Merrill Lynch) devrait prendre fin avant avril prochain. À partir de là, le reste des actions de la CJT pourraient également être cédées mais de préférence au secteur privé jordanien.

L'ouverture du capital a cependant pris du temps. Les premières tentatives de privatisation remontent à 1986 mais rien de concret n'est accompli avant 1994 où le gouvernement

décide enfin de passer à l'action. Parmi les mesures de l'époque sont prévues une nouvelle loi sur les télécommunications, la création d'un organisme chargé de la réorganisation du secteur et la transformation de l'établissement des télécommunications. Celui-ci devient la CJT en octobre 1996, une entreprise dont le capital reste aux mains de l'État mais qui doit répondre à des critères de rentabilité. Premier pas vers le tout privé.

Objectif principal de la nouvelle société : augmenter le nombre de lignes téléphoniques qui manquent cruellement en Jordanie. Le royaume n'en compte aujourd'hui que 380.000 pour 4,5 millions de Jordaniens. Parallèlement la

compagnie a adopté une nouvelle numérotation qui passe de 6 à 7 chiffres. Ce système permet la mise en service de 9 millions de lignes. D'ici dix ans, la CJT espère ainsi combler le déficit de lignes avec une numérotation uniforme à 7 chiffres. Le projet dans lequel il est prévu l'installation de nouvelles centrales téléphoniques coûte environ 100 millions de JD. Depuis juin 1996, plus de 120.000 lignes (nouvelles ou anciennes renommées) ont été ouvertes, la première à Telaa Al-Ali (Amman-ouest).

Par ailleurs, l'organisme public de la réorganisation des télécommunications a accordé à deux sociétés privées le droit exclusif d'installer des cabines téléphoniques publiques. Le contrat prévoit l'émergence de



Près de 8000 cabines téléphoniques devraient couvrir le pays d'ici cinq ans.

4000 cabines pour chacune des deux entreprises dans les cinq ans à venir. Alo en a déjà installé plus de 500 dans le royaume.

À noter enfin que Mamoun Balkar, le directeur de la CJT, a annoncé la sortie de l'annuaire 97, qui a priori contient tous les changements de numérotation et les nouvelles lignes de

Hussein Abu-Rumman

C'est la vie

L'agenda culturel d'Amman

Cinéma

Mon oncle. Un film de Jacques Tati, non sous-titré (1958). Confronté à la vie moderne, avec ses stéréotypes et ses gadgets, l'insouciant Hubert retrouve le monde de l'enfance, en compagnie de son neveu. Lundi 12 janvier au Centre culturel français.

هناك الكثير من

Rock 'n Pop '97

A year of small hits and large misses

By J.D. Considine

IT WAS not the best of years. It was not the worst of years. It was a year of mediocrity, long on sappy sentiment, pre-fab idols and crass commercialism, but short on music of lasting merit.

Sales were up overall, and chart records were broken, but none of that really amounted to much. Although the singles chart was rife with megahits, there were few smashes to speak of on the albums front. Unlike 1996, which saw eight albums pass the 5 million mark, only one of 1997's releases—"Spice" by the Spice Girls—has done quintuple-platinum business.

Instead of big hits, what the pop audience turned to was a variety of smaller smashes.

Between the purloined hooks of Sean "Puffy" Combs' work and the hypnotic pulse of Timbaland's productions for Missy Elliott and Ginuwine, hip-hop was again a force on the charts. Alternating had a string of strong singles, even if its radio-friendly acts, like Chumbawamba and Smash Mouth, were mostly one-hit wonders. And while electronica never quite became the Next Big Thing, it did serve up significant success for Chemical Brothers and Prodigy.

There are few char-busters in my Top 10, but each provided enough musical sustenance to become fixtures in my CD player over the last 12 months.

■ Radiohead, "OK Computer" (Capitol 55229)—Radiohead's "OK Computer" has haunted me since the moment I first played it. Some of that has to do with the plaintive perfection of Thom Yorke's wan, world-weary tenor, a voice that makes even the most opaque lyrics seem emotionally immediate. But it was the lush beauty of the arrangements that really won me over, creating a sonic world worth getting lost in.

■ David Bowie, "Earthling" (Virgin 42627)—Although the songs on "Earthling" are as tuneful and sharply drawn as anything David Bowie has done, the album's greatest pleasure is the playing. From the tart keyboard of "Little Wonder" to the acid guitar of "I'm Afraid of Americans," it's amazingly easy to get lost in the album's sound.

■ Bob Dylan, "Time Out of Mind"



Janet Jackson

(Columbia 68556)—A masterpiece of sonic texture and storytelling, Bob Dylan's "Time Out of Mind" is less a collection of songs than a sort of virtual soundscape, one in which Dylan's quirks and idiosyncrasies make perfect musical sense. Easily his best album since "Blood on the Tracks," it's everything a comeback should be.

■ "Nuyorican Soul" (Giant Step/Blue Thumb 1130)—A perfect fusion of Latin jazz and dance music, "Nuyorican Soul" appeals equally to head and hips. With guest spots by everyone from Eddie Palmieri to George Benson to Jazzy Jeff, it serves as a reminder of the debt disco owed to jazz fusion.

■ Ken Ishii, "Jelly Tones" (Medicine 68179)—The best-kept secret in techno, Ken Ishii is a master at making electronic music sound warm and acoustic. But the best thing about "Jelly Tones" is the drama built into these soundscapes, which makes each song a surprise in itself.

■ BT, "ESCM" (Perfection/Reprise 46799)—Although BT's music could be described as techno, the term doesn't begin to define what he delivers on "ESCM." Through the ferocious propulsion of "Love, Peace and Grease" or the near-symphonic scope of "Firewater," he proves there's more to electronic dance music than preprogrammed beats.

■ Janet Jackson, "The Velvet Rope" (Virgin 7243 8 44762)—For all its talk of sex and flirtations with kink, the most compelling thing about Janet Jackson's "The Velvet Rope" is the emotional honesty at its core—that, and the sly, soulful soundscape Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis have constructed around Jackson's increasingly compelling voice.

■ "The Vision of Escaflowne" (Lovers Only) (Victor Japan 841)—Featuring music from the Japanese animated series "The Vision of Escaflowne," "Lovers Only" suggests that Yoko Kanno is one of the world's most gifted and versatile soundtrack composers. Equally adept at pop and symphonic styles, Kanno makes music so vividly emotive that it's almost as gripping as the show itself.

■ Stereolab, "Dots and Loops" (Elektra 62065)—For all its earnest modernism, there's something wonderfully old-fashioned about the sense of song craft in Stereolab's music. "Dots and Loops" manages a perfect balance between the mathematic ingenuity of harmony, the melodic grace of voices and the textural pleasures of electronics.

■ Albita, "Una Mujer Como Yo" (Crescent Moon/Epic 68304)—Albita's roots may be in Cuba, but the appeal of "Una Mujer Como Yo" is universal. It isn't just that her voice, so strong, supple and expressive, immediately commands the listener's attention; it's also that her senses of melody and rhythm are so perfectly intertwined that even those who have no knowledge of Spanish will understand her music.

The short list of albums that almost made the top 10: Namie Amuro, "Concentration 20" (A&M Trax Japan 15815); Björk, "Homogenic" (Elektra 62061); Fleetwood Mac, "The Dance" (Reprise 46702); Bentley Rhythm Ace, "Bentley Rhythm Ace" (Astralwerks 6223); LL Cool J, "Phenomenon" (Def Jam 314 539 186); Paul Simon, "Songs From The Capeman" (Warner Bros. 46814); Phish, "Modus Operandi" (Astralwerks 6207); Ken Ishii as Rising Sun/Yoga, "Green Times" (Sublime 5002); Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott, "Supa Dupa Fly" (EastWest 62095); the Crystal Method, "Vegas" (Outpost 30003).

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

De Niro, Hoffman wage politics in a Tired Satire

By Stephen Hunter

"WAG THE DOG" is stupid the title. The movie is only a little smarter. It's really a telegram from inside the Beltway. We know who you have become, it says. You have become us and we hate you for it.

A related question might be: Will anybody not enclosed in either a freeway or a beltway care? Probably not. So inside it's almost parochial. Barry Levinson's new film watches as a media consultant (Robert De Niro playing a Lyn Nofziger look-alike) and a movie producer (Dustin Hoffman playing a Robert Evans look-alike) band together to invent a fictitious war as a chaff screen to deflect media radars from the real problem: a second-term-seeking president who sexually molests a teenage girl 11 days before the election. You can feel everybody trying to be dark and cynical and outrageous, to do Evelyn Waugh and Joe McGinniss one better, but most of this news is pretty old: You can "sell" a nominee just like a product? You can spin an issue to your advantage? You can plant stories?

The horror, the horror! What "Wag the Dog" suffers from more than anything is its naivete. It's relatively unsophisticated about press culture and gullibility (or lack thereof), and it really misunderstands the nature of the "problem" between press officers and the press. It's not that we're easy to fool—not this easy, anyway—but that there are so damn many of us and not even our editors can control us. A poor Phantom pilot can't even dump a couple of 500-pound fags in some Third World village to conserve fuel without CNN being there the next news cycle with footage of the crater where the school used to be, the dead kids, the wailing moms; by 11:30, the ambassador from Guastakia or Ruritania or Guavohuto is spraying indignation spit on poor Ted Koppel.

Spin that, Jack! As "Wag the



Hoffman, Heche and De Niro

Dog" has it, De Niro's Conrad Brean recruits Hoffman's Stanley Moss (the "C" is silent, note the too-cute press notes) to produce a jolly little tiff in a far-off land, using the latest in technology, on the grounds that most Americans would rather watch the blossom of napalm clouds and the eerie precision of smart bombs than hear about a commander in chief who can't keep his zipper zipped.

The beauty part is that there's no need to actually waste napalm or very expensive smart bombs; that can be morphed in. For some reason, the country chosen is Albania, presumably because Levinson and his screenwriters, David Mamet and Hilary Henkin, think the name "Albania" is funny. They should visit the place; there aren't a lot of laughs there. The movie is at its surest when it covers process: Hoffman brainstorms with other creative types to come up with a whole package, a structure for the drama, combat footage, and a touching icon.

It's fascinating as it shows the computer morphing that can remove a video image of a pretty young American gal festooned in some costume director's idea of the Albanian

national dress from a depthless blue room somewhere in Culver City, Calif., and insert it believably in a burning village synopated to the screams of the dying and the bleating sirens of the SS come to arrest Anne Frank. Hoffman's Moss even hires a fad expert (Denis Leary) and a composer (Willie Nelson) to generate ancillary products and a theme song. Of course, satire is supposed to be exaggerated, but only a little bit.

When the administration declares combat action in Albania, and no reporters show up there to independently verify the operation—remember the squads of photographers and camera crews on the beach in Somalia when the Marines came ashore?—you know that nobody's thought too hard about it. In fact, the movie works only as long as it restricts itself to dark studios and isolated war rooms under the White House.

Only Hoffman is consistently amusing, and then only if you're marginally aware of the reputation and presence of the famed producer Evans, a genius (the "Godfather" films) and charlatan ("Sliver") and world-class annoyance if there ever was one. The megalomania of

the character is ever astounding ("Is anyone listening to me?" he bellows, annoyed that a phone call from the president has interrupted his meeting).

His endless riffs on the importance of the producer have the feel of the borderline sociopathology that would indeed make a good product.

The soldier (Woody Harrelson) actually had spent the past 12 years in the stockade. This is pale and thin: Any moderately experienced reporter would prick this balloon with half an hour's worth of phone calls and begin to organize his Pulitzer acceptance speech, his speaking tour, his book contract and his "McLaughlin Group" appearances that afternoon. Possibly the worst sin that "Wag the Dog" commits, however, is an affront to every penny, every chisel, every wessel, every suck-up in this town. It presumes that Hollywood can make up something fictitious that's more outrageous than the folly, the mendacity, the surrealism of the real thing. As if! "Wag the Dog" is rated R for some mild sexual references and profanity.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

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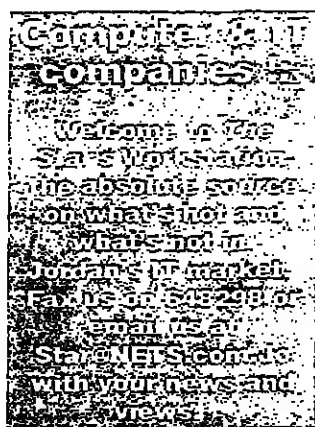


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THE STAR'S

COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser



Points to remember, for computing without headaches:

A sufferer speaks

By Jabra Ghneim

Special to The Star
TO BE totally frank, I am very frustrated with the levels of service that local computer companies offer to their clients. The problem has recently escalated after the introduction of Windows 95 and NT 4.0.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I can't find one decent troubleshooting repair-shop in town. Let me give you an example.

Two months ago, I decided to leap forward and install Windows 95 on my home system. At that time I was a Win95 user for more than 18 months and I thought I knew all the ins and outs of the system. By that time, I had also installed Win95 and NT 4.0 on four machines and a laptop with no trouble at all.

I also managed to successfully install Win95 on my home machine. But that night I discovered a horrible fact: when I bought that system a year ago from a vendor he assured me that it was an upgradable system and that it had the latest PCI motherboard and BIOS on it. Upon upgrading, I discovered that both the video board and the RAM chips were incompatible somehow with Win95.

I always got an error #14

after using a memory intensive application. Worse than that, the video board wasn't upgradable to 2MB of VRAM as I was told when I bought the system. So, I went back to the vendor—after spending the past two months trying to fix the problem or find out what's



causing it. The vendor has spent the past six days so far trying to fix the system by finding RAM chips that would fit on my PCI board. It will be interesting to see if he can fix my problem!

So, should computer users in this country study circuit boards and start inspecting what's within their new machine to rest assured that they have the right stuff? I don't think so.

Personal Computers are rapidly becoming household items and if PC vendors are to stay in business in this country,

they should start offering the best quality of products and services. Many of the vendors need to step up the beat in training and certifying their maintenance and service staff, who are in a had need for some serious training. I wonder how these vendors work out their service contracts with big corporate customers. It will be interesting to hear the story from the corporate side. I also believe that vendors should always work on selling scalable machines to their customers.

Another phenomenon that I noticed earlier this week was seeing an advertisement placed by a local company in a local newspaper. It was for a computer company and read something like, "don't risk the future of your company with amateurs." I found the advertisement very distasteful and unprofessional. But it reflects on how some prefer to participate in the computer business in Jordan, basically by putting down others and not on merits and capabilities. In the case of my computer I took it down to a bunch that many would describe as amateurs, because they don't have an inflated bureaucracy and a fancy office. But, they are truly

professional in the way they conduct business. Thanks to them I managed to pinpoint the main causes of my problem.

Operating systems that will come out starting the second quarter of this year promise to make computer systems easier to repair and manage. But still, we will always have the little glitches and incompatibilities which will distress our lives and drive us nuts.

To all those who are planning to buy new systems this year, my advice is to watch out for the scalability; make sure your motherboard has enough space to take any

AMD K7 attacks Intel Pentium II

AMD, THE producer of advanced microprocessors that are gaining in on Intel processors in the PC market.



AMD K6-current standard



Intel Pentium II- New slot

recently unveiled plans for its latest Pentium-compatible processor, the K7. The K7 is designed as a Pentium II performance processor and is designed to comply with the new Slot 1 standard, by which a Pentium II processor is supposed to fit into a cartridge (as is clear from the Pentium II photo). So, the K7 represents a

departure from the current Socket 7 standard, used by the K6. Here it is important to note that Intel has not yet licensed the new slot 1 standard.

AMD went around this by creating a 'technical' solution to the problem in cooperation with DEC (Digital

Equipment). This means that computer manufacturers will have the option to utilize a Pentium II replacement soon, to bring down the prices of their

PCs. The K7 should be available by 1999, and will probably spark a legal battle with Intel which is already losing ground in the microprocessors market to companies like AMD, Cyrix and the new entrant IDT/Centaur. ■

News update

Bravo NETS

● Once again, Jordanian Bulletin Board Service (BBS) operator, NETS, deserves to be commended for the wonderful communication opportunity it is offering Jordanians abroad in chat with local users.

NETS subscribers situated anywhere in the world, can log into their NETS account through the Internet, and read chat with local users and can chat with local users and read all conferences found on the NETS local BBS service.

This means that the local user dials up a local BBS number (which isn't an Internet connection and is therefore costing only the price of a normal phone call), while the user from abroad is probably

paying very little anyway because Internet access rates are generally cheap internationally. Already, many users are enjoying the service, staying in touch with the 'folks' back home. This service is becoming increasingly more important now as thousands of young Jordanians are travelling abroad for work opportunities and as there are thousands of students abroad who have Internet access.

PCs break \$1,000 mark in USA

● The big news from the USA computer market is that PCs have dipped in price below the \$1,000 mark, meaning that

upgrades you might want to have in the foreseeable future. With equipment and chip prices falling so rapidly this will be a crucial factor. Another very important factor is a solid service contract and plenty of shipping around. If you have friends who had machines for some time ask them what they think of the service their vendor offers. I believe that abiding by these rules will help in making 1998 a year free of possible headaches faced when our beloved systems crash on us. ■

email: GhneimJ@go.com.jo

Leaders including IBM, Compaq and Hewlett-Packard have announced low cost PC systems. Market analysts believe that this trend will endure and that, most importantly, the prices for entry level PCs will never go up again.

The Star
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http://www.Arabia.com/star

INTERFACE

BY ZEID NASSER

Year 2000 problem, draws nearer: The Millennium Bug

YOU'VE PROBABLY heard something about a "problem that may hit computers in the year 2000", or what is being termed the 'Millennium bug'.

We had discussed this issue a couple of times before in this column, but as the year 2000 draws closer, it's worth taking another look at it and to highlight the increased attention this problem is receiving.

The year 2000 problem is simply the result of short-sighted software developers, who created computer operating systems and software in the past few decades without regarding the need to incorporate a four digit date.

In other words, computer software running all over the world is dependant on a two digit dating system by which the year 1998 is stored as '98'. When the year 2000 arrives, the computer dates will turn to '00', signifying the last two digits of the year. This is where an electronic catastrophe will strike.

Computer and information technology consultants agree, after much research into this matter, that this 'dating' problem will result in computer software and systems to malfunction. In some cases there will be simple, easily-correctable malfunctions. However, in other cases, complicated situations will arise which may not necessarily be solved. In fact, the only way to solve this problem would be to re-program or re-write the underlying code of software to organizations.

Such a process will take up a lot of time—well over a year or so—and a lot of efforts—the combined efforts of a multitude of programmers and IT consultants. So, it will obviously cost a lot of money.

The danger lies in the fact that computers today run all sorts of critical functions in sensitive organizations like hospitals, military facilities and research institutes—that is, of course, in addition to businesses and government organizations all over the world. So, computer 'glitches' cannot be tolerated in business environments where computer downtime means losses in profits, and they could even result in threats to human safety in critical organizations like hospitals and so forth.

Already, key officials have spoken up on this issue. In fact, Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, mentioned it last week, stating that one of his Government's main targets in 1998 is to overcome the year 2000 bug!

KLM, the Royal Dutch Airline, announced that there is a possibility that it will cancel some of its flights in the year 2000, due to the airlines worries regarding computer systems in airports or in different countries of the world. So, as it is obvious, even if a global company like KLM fixes up the problem with its own software, it has no guarantee that all other parties involved in flight logistics would do the same.

This is where the real danger stems from, the lack of a general awareness or consensus regarding the Year 2000 problem.

Experts recommend that the first thing concerned organizations should do, is back up all their information, so as to secure it just in case computers malfunction severely resulting in loss of stored data. Secondly, it is worth contacting an IT consultant or expert to examine the possibilities that the year 2000 problem could affect the organization's performance. For companies with large systems and huge amounts of stored data, this is not an option; it is a must to consult experts on the matter.

Even in the Middle East region, the importance of the problem is rising. Saudi Aramco, the well-known petroleum company, has already employed consultants to solve the problem in its organization, and the costs are said to run into millions of dollars.

The year 2000 matter is no joke. It's worth gaining more knowledge about it. You have been warned. ■

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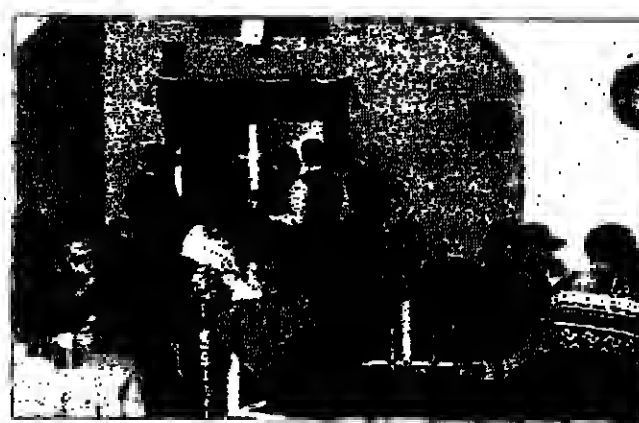
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Ramadani nights sparkle at the Villa Cafe



AMMAN (Star)—Deep down in Um Uthina is an old ancient house that is full of mysteries. Villa Cafe is designed to cater for your every need. As the name implies, Villa Cafe projects the homely touch. Refurbished into a modern cafe, the Villa, through its three-room setting, seeks to reassure the visitor of the congeniality of your home. The sitting-rooms, tables, right lighting, and of course the excellent service—gives you an ambience you'd be hard-pressed to find in the rest of Amman.

At Villa Cafe, there is something for everyone: Young, old, middle-aged, everybody can come in and enjoy a good night out in a serene and pleasant atmosphere. Furthermore, patrons can sit anywhere they want. If they prefer the more sedate evening, they can move into one of the other rooms for a quiet drink and a bit of a chat.

For the more active there is live music playing, not too live but just right that to reflect the right atmosphere. Every evening, there is what the management of the cafe call Ramadani nights. First, you can enjoy listening to the sound of Sief. Armed with his guitar, he sings both in English and Arabic tunes we are all familiar with. In that respect, Sief is very versatile, he has the right kind of voice, to get you in the right mood.

But wait for it. After Sief you have the next delight of the evening. For the rest of Ramadan, Villa Cafe is putting on a special group from Damascus. Singer Amir is joined by the Moulinee Darassous Band, where for the next part of the evening, you can sit and relax to a very traditional taste in music. The almost scintillating sound of Arab originality and culture is combined with the traditional costumes of the band.

Dressed in traditional white overflowing robes, they are a sight to remember. Relax with your argileh, or sip Arabic, Turkish or French coffee while you watch the live performance of the Moulinee, and before you go home there is even special treat of *S'hour*. ■

حسين